TRADITIONS APART

The Life and Legacy of Rajaji and Periyar

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Preface

Lives of greatmen are always seen with admiration. However, there is no necessity to see their lives free from criticism, especially while they play a leading role in public realm. Moreover, the greatness is not embedded in similaries of ideas or activities in relation to particular set of norms. Differences and contradictions are always seen in prominent spheres. Sometimes, greatness is seen in conformity to tradition or in opposition to tradition. Men's views and ideas have similarities as well as contradictions irrespective of traditions. Thomas Carlyle held that the history of the world is but the biography of great men. Both the personality of greatmen and their ideas played a significant role in shaping the world.

Great men see their ideas put into practice in their own era or left for future generations to materilaise. Their visions help future generations or their visions might be realized with some modifications as the very course of surviving their spirit. Wther they are conservative or liberal, revolutionary or perverted, democratic or autocratic, successive generations have the nack of appropriating them for their own end. Few great men do not leave their ideas and visions to distortion or to modify according to changing needs. Their personality itself was not flexible enough to allow others to raid on them. This trend explians some sort of discontinuity in their legacy. Sometimes, greatness lies in inventing 'isms' or in advocating 'isms.' Ironically, in many occasions, this trend is categorized or labeled by others rather than declaration of greatmen themselves. Moreover, there is always a difference between the accepted meaning of particular 'ism' and the meaning that greatmen wish to overload. This is how the idea of conservatism, liberalism, rationalism or humanism understood in the life and legacy of greatmen of Tamil Nadu, specifically in C. Rajagopalachari and E.V. Ramasamy.

Liberalism guarantees life, liberty and property. However, it could not stop the disproportionate accumulation of wealth and power at the cost of social justice. It is believed that democracy and socialism assure better life for the developing society in the process of nation building. When traditional system gives rise to domination of certain groups, the reaction in the form of modern values embedded in rationalism is formed to mobilize opposition groups. Class is formed in the particular course of economic life, whereas caste is ordained by scriptures. The access to resources in terms of material or knowledge depends upon the innate differences between individuals and their varying abilities and efforts. Someone may be endowed with exceptional intelligence or talent, or may have worked very hard to achieve their wealth and status. Or they rise to high status by exploiting the weak groups.

In this way, social inequality is not the outcome of innate or natural differences between people, but is produced by the society and sanctioned by the

scriptures. This sort of social stratification persists over generations. It is closely linked to the family and to the inheritance of social resources from one generation to the next. Within the caste system, birth dictates occupational opportunities. The ascribed aspect of social inequality is reinforced by the practice of endogamy. People with the greatest social privileges express the strongest support for systems of stratification such as caste and race. Those who have experienced the exploitation and humiliation are most likely to challenge it.

Traditionalism embedded in rigid religious sanctions is opposed by rationalism combined with atheism. Rationalism is any view appealing to reason as a source of knowledge or justification. Atheism can be either the rejection of theism, or the position that deities do not exist. Some atheists intend to accept secular philosophies such as humanism, rationalism, or naturalism.

This book brings out the life of C. Rajagopalachari and E.V. Ramasamy and discusses their contesting ideas and activities in the political history of Tamil Nadu. The life of C. Rajagopalachari and E.V. Ramasamy illustrates the inherent contest between traditionalism and rationalism, between nationalism and separatism, between religion and atheism, between varnashrama dharma and casteless society, between constructive programme based on Gandhian values and social reforms based on Dravidian values. From 1924 to till their demise, they worked for their respective values. The social and political history of Tamil Nadu witnessed these trends. Both were born during the time of great famines of Madras. Ironically, they were close in personal life and departed on ideological grounds.

Rajaji was an Indian lawyer, freedom-fighter, politician, writer, statesman and leader of the Indian National Congress who served as the last Governor-General of India. He served as the Premier of the Madras Presidency, Governor of West Bengal, Minister for Home Affairs of the Indian Union and Chief Minister of Madras state. In 1930, he led the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha in response to the Dandi March and courted imprisonment. Rajaji was described by Gandhi as the 'keeper of my conscience.' He was the first recipient of India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna. He was the founder of the Swatantra Party. Rajaji vehemently opposed the usage of nuclear weapons and was a proponent of world peace and disarmament. He remained a symbol of liberal and traditional thinker of India. He tried to build a team of liberals embedded in traditional Hindu values against the socialistic oriented state centered congress regime.

Periyar was a Dravidian social activist, who founded the Self-Respect Movement and Dravidar Kazhagam. At young age, he witnessed numerous incidents of racial, caste and gender discrimination. Periyar married when he was 19, and had a daughter who lived for only 5 months. Periyar joined the Indian National Congress in 1919, but resigned in 1925 when he felt that the

party was only serving the interests of the Brahmins. In 1924, Periyar led a non-violent agitation in Vaikom, Kerala. From 1929 to 1932 toured Malaysia, Europe, and Russia, which had an influence on him. In 1939, Periyar became the head of the Justice Party, and in 1944, he changed its name to Dravidar Kazhagam. He advocated for an independent Dravidanadu. His first wife, Nagammai, died in 1933. Periyar married for a second time in July 1948. The party later split and one group led by C. N. Annadurai formed the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in 1949. He supported Congress led by Kamaraj and propagated his rationalistic social reforms till his death in 1973.

In terms of legacy they left for the successive generations, Rajaji is seen as rigid and does not offer any place to manipulate or distort for the personal ends of political leaders. Rajaji's moral stand remains an idea, not seen in practice in the context of manipulative and opportunistic politics. In fact, politicians are afraid to say 'we will bring Rajaji rule.' Though he changed his stand not to enforce Hindi and even opposed the enforcement of Hindi, his anti-Congress views were not adequately highlighted as the crescendo of Dravidian leaders dominated the scene. Periyar provides enough space to manipulate and distort the so called Dravidian range of politicians. In fact, Rajaji stands alone with his principles. Periyar stands with branches and spectrum of legacy. In spite of all these discontinuities and distortions, the legacy survives as an idea in large measure and their impacts on the politics and governance of Tamil Nadu in one way or other continue.

In one way or other, Periyar's Dravidian Movement can be considered as one of the legacies of Rajaji. In the absence of Hindi enforcement, new scheme of primary education, and Sanskritization of Tamil tradition – which remain the legacies of Rajaji – Periyar's Dravidian Movement could not have enough impetus. People won't listen to simple slogans like 'God does not exist' or 'the Dravidian race does not have Gods.' Rajaji was the latent master of Dravidian Movement. Ironically, his opposition to Congress and his later day's anti-Hindi stand in support of Tamil are less noticed by the Dravidian offsprings.

On the other, it is to be searched how far the Tamils realized the significance of the rational stand of Periyar. Construction of casteless society, women's liberaltion, political power for the common good, etc. are the major issues to be discussed. The elite are always in the lead to appropriate not only the ideas but also the resources. The critical question in assessing the legacy is who are empowered and who are weakend. This question is ultimately raised to bring out a new line of struggle.

Hagiographies and constructed biographies are available for many greatmen of Tamil Nadu. Surprisingly, there are not available for both Rajaji and Periyar. This is because, both were blunt and not ready for any compromise and cajole. They did not show any interest in sychophancy or followers for name sake or personal advantage. Their pragmatic approach and open talk without sophistry

earned enemies. This book has been written for general readers. I do not claim any originality in writing this book. I do not explore the other side stories of greatmen for the simply reason that it will not help to alter the course of Tamil Nadu history. Perhaps, such kind of efforts will bring some popularity to the author as well as the publisher. I restrict myself to tell stories on the already told stories of greatmen, not on the untold stories of them. Besides, I have no affinity with any greatmen of Tamil Nadu past and present, whom I can acknowledge for their 'generous help' or for 'personal interview' at least for understanding and assessing the legacies of these two greatmen.

S. Chandran

6 March 2007

1. Life of Rajaji

The story of greatman is usually begun in admiration of his character. Otherwise, the tradition will suffer or the readers will be unsatisfied. It is said, while Rajaji was a child, an astrologer told his parents that their child would have the fortunes of a king, a guru, an exile and an outcaste. The people will worship him; they will also reject him. He will sit on an emperor's throne; he will live in a poor man's hut. Rajagopalachari was born to Chakravarti Iyengar and Singaramma on 10 December 1878 in a devout Vaishnavite Brahmin family of Thorapalli, a small village, near the industrial town hosur, in the Krishnagiri District of Tamil Nadu state. Chakravarti Iyengar was the munsiff of Thorapalli. Rajaji attended school in Hosur and college in Madras and Bangalore. He graduated in arts from Central College, Bangalore in 1897, and studied law at Presidency College, Madras in 1899. He started practising as a lawyer in 1900. When in Salem, Rajaji showed keen interest in social and political affairs.

Rajaji's interest in public affairs and politics began when he was elected to the government of the city of Salem. In the early 1900s, he was inspired by Indian nationalist Bal Gangadhar Tilak. In 1917, Rajaji was elected Chairman of Salem municipality. As Chairman, he was responsible for the election of the first Dalit member of the Salem municipal government. Rajaji joined the Indian National Congress and became involved in the Indian independence movement. In 1908, he defended Indian freedom fighter P. Varadarajulu Naidu against charges of sedition. He participated in 1919 in the protests against the Rowlatt Act, which indefinitely extended emergency measures passed during World War One. Rajaji was a close friend of Indian nationalist V. O. Chidambaram Pillai, and was highly admired by Annie Besant, a supporter of Indian independence, and C. Vijayaraghavachariar, president of the Indian National Congress in 1920.

When Mahatma Gandhi entered the movement for Indian Independence in 1919, Rajaji followed him. He participated in the Non-Cooperation movement and stopped practicing law. In 1921 he was elected to the Congress Working Committee and served as the General Secretary of the party. When the Indian National Congress split in 1923, Rajaji was a member of the Civil Disobedience Enquiry Committee. He supported the old guard and opposed the council entry programme of the Swarajists.

Rajaji was one of Gandhi's chief lieutenants during the Vaikom Satyagraha, a movement to improve the lot of Hindu untouchables. It was during this time, that E. V. Ramasamy functioned as a Congress member under Rajaji's leadership. The two later became close friends and remained so till the end despite their political rivalry. In the early 1930s, Rajaji emerged as one of the foremost leaders of the Tamil Nadu Congress. When Mahatma Gandhi organized the Dandi march in 1930, Rajaji broke the salt tax at Vedaranyam near Nagapattinam and was sent to prison. Rajaji was subsequently elected

President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee. When the Government of India Act was enacted in 1935, Rajaji was instrumental in getting the Indian National Congress to participate in the general elections.

The Indian National Congress was elected to power in 1937 for the first time in Madras Presidency, a province of British India; with the exception of the six years when Madras was in a state of Emergency, ruled the Presidency until India became independent on 15 August 1947. Rajagopalachari was the first Premier of Madras Presidency from the Congress party.

Rajagopalachari issued the Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act 1939 by which restrictions were removed on Dalits and Shanars entering Hindu temples. In the same year, the Meenakshi temple at Madurai was also opened to the Dalits and Shanars. Rajaji also introduced prohibition, and also a sales tax to compensate for the loss of government revenue that resulted from prohibition. Because of the revenue decline resulting from prohibition the Provincial Government shut down hundreds of government-run primary schools. Rajaji's political opponents alleged that this decision deprived many low-caste and Dalit students of their education. Rajaji's opponents also assigned casteist motives to his government's implementation of Gandhi's Wardha scheme into the education system.

Rajagopalachari's rule is largely remembered however for compulsory introduction of Hindi in educational institutions, which made him highly unpopular. This measure sparked off widespread anti-Hindi protests, which led to violence in some places. Over 1,200 men, women and children were jailed for participating in these protests. Two protesters, Thalamuthu Nadar and Natarasan, were killed. In 1940, Congress ministers resigned protesting the declaration of war on Germany without their consent, and the Governor took over the reins of the administration. The unpopular law was eventually repealed by the Governor of Madras on 21 February 1940. Despite the numerous shortcomings, Madras under Rajagopalachari was still regarded as the best administered province in British India.

As soon as the Second World War broke out Rajaji resigned as Premier along with other members of his cabinet to protest the declaration of war by the Viceroy of India. Rajaji was arrested in December 1940 in accordance with the Defence of India rules and sentenced to one-year in prison. However, subsequently Rajaji differed in opinion over opposition to British war effort. He opposed the Quit India Movement that Gandhi had initiated in 1942 to pressure the British government to grant independence, and instead advocated dialogue with the British. He reasoned that passivity and neutrality would be harmful to India's interests when the country was threatened with invasion. He also advocated dialogue with the Muslim League, which was demanding the partition of India. He resigned from the party and the assembly following

differences over resolutions passed by the Madras Congress legislative party and with the leader of the Madras provincial Congress K. Kamaraj.

With the end of the war came in 1945, elections were held in the Madras Presidency in 1946. Kamaraj, the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee backed Tanguturi Prakasam as the Chief Ministerial candidate to prevent Rajaji from coming to power. Rajaji, however, did not contest the elections and Prakasam was elected.

In the last years of the war, Rajaji was instrumental in negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah. In 1944, he proposed a solution to the Indian Constitutional tangle. In the same year, Rajaji proposed that 55% be the "absolute majority" threshold for deciding whether a district should be a part of India or Pakistan, triggering a huge controversy among nationalists. From 1946 to 1947, Rajaji served as the Minister for Industry, Supply, Education and Finance in the Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

When India attained independence on 15 August 1947, the British province of Bengal was divided into West Bengal and East Bengal, with West Bengal becoming part of India and East Bengal part of Pakistan. With the support of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajaji was appointed the first Governor of West Bengal.

Rajaji was disliked by Bengalis for his criticism of Subhash Chandra Bose during the 1938 Tripuri Congress session. His appointment was unsuccessfully opposed by Subhash's brother Sarat Chandra Bose. During his tenure as Governor, Rajaji's priorities were dealing with refugees and bringing peace and stability in the aftermath of the Calcutta riots. He declared his commitment to neutrality and justice at a meeting of Muslim businessmen: "Whatever may be my defects or lapses, let me assure you that I shall never disfigure my life with any deliberate acts of injustice to any community whatsoever." Rajaji was also strongly opposed to proposals to include areas from Bihar and Orissa in the province of West Bengal. To one such proposal by the editor of an important newspaper, he replied: "I see that you are not able to restrain the policy of agitation over inter-provincial boundaries. It is easy to yield to current pressure of opinion and it is difficult to impose on enthusiastic people any policy of restraint. But I earnestly plead that we should do all we can to prevent ill-will from hardening into a chronic disorder. We have enough ill-will and prejudice to cope with. Must we hasten to create further fissiparous forces?" Rajaji was highly regarded and respected by Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and the state cabinet.

From 10 November 1947 to 24 November 1947, Rajaji served as Acting Governor-General of India in the absence of Lord Mountbatten of Burma, who was on leave in England to attend the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Mountbatten's nephew Prince Philip. Rajaji led a very simple life in the viceregal palace, washing his clothes and polishing his own shoes. Mountbatten

was so impressed with Rajaji's abilities that when he was to leave India in June 1948 Rajaji was his second choice to succeed him after Vallabhbhai Patel. Rajaji was eventually chosen as the Governor-General when Nehru disagreed with Mountbatten's first choice, as did Patel himself. Rajaji was initially hesitant but accepted when Nehru wrote to him, "I hope you will not disappoint us. We want you to help us in many ways. The burden on some of us is more than we can carry." Rajaji served as Governor-General of India from June 1948 to 26 January 1950 and was not only the last Governor-General of India but the only Indian Governor-General of India.

By the end of the year 1949, it was assumed that Rajaji, already Governor-General, would continue as President. Backed by Nehru, Rajaji wanted to stand for the presidential election but later withdrew, due to the opposition of a section of the Indian National Congress mostly made up of North Indians who were concerned about Rajaji's non-participation during the Quit India Movement.

In 1950 Rajaji joined the Union Cabinet as Minister without Porfolio, at Nehru's invitation. In 1951 he was put in charge of Home Affairs, serving as the country's Home Minister for nearly 10 months. He warned Nehru about the expansionist designs of China and expressed regret over the Tibet problem, his views being shared with his predecessor Sardar Patel. He also expressed concern over demands made to establish new linguistically-based states, arguing that they would generate differences amongst the people.

In the 1952 elections the Congress Party was reduced to a minority in the State Assembly, and the coalition led by the Communist Party of India appeared to be in a better position to form the government. Governor Sri Prakasa nominated Rajaji to the Legislative Council without the advice of the Council of Ministers, and appointed Rajagopalchari as non-elected Chief Minister. A further maneuver to secure a majority involved luring opposition Members of the Legislative Assembly to join the party. Nehru was furious and wrote to Rajaji that "the one thing we must avoid giving is the impression that we stick to office and we want to keep others out at all costs." Rajaji refused to contest a by-election and remained a non-elected member. P.C. Alexander, a former Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra governor, has described these events as a serious constitutional impropriety.

During this period Potti Sriramulu called for the creation of a separate Telugu state, to be named Andhra. He went on an unconditional fast until his goal was achieved, dying as a result of the fast. Violent riots broke out in the Telugu areas of Madras State. Nehru had initially warned that this method of fasting to achieve administrative or political changes would put an end to democratic government but after death of Sriramulu, Nehru agreed to the demand for a separate state of Andhra although he refused to include Madras city in Andhra. The State of Andhra was formed out of Madras State in 1953, although Rajaji

continued to be disengaged from issues surrounding the new state. Rajaji was accused of not intervening to end the fast or to provide medical help for Sriramulu, even though the fast had continued for over 50 days. Prior to his death only one other person, Jatin Das, had fasted to death in modern Indian history. In most cases fasters either gave up, were hospitalised or were arrested and force fed.

Rajaji removed controls on foodgrains, and introduced a plan in which students had to go to school in the morning and to obligatorily learn the family vocation, such as carpentry or masonry, after school. It was initially implemented in the rural areas of the state, and was strongly opposed as casteist and dubbed Kula Kalvi Thittam (Hereditary Education Policy) by his close friend Periyar, who vehemently opposed it. This policy was widely criticized by members of his own party and by political opponents. The controversy led to Rajagopalachari's resignation in 1954. Although he claimed to have resigned on grounds of health, the widespread unpopularity of the government due to the Kula Kalvi Thittam is widely viewed as the cause. On 15 August 1954, Rajagopalachari became the first recipient of India's highest civilian award, the Bharat Ratna.

From 1954 to 1956, Rajaji withdrew from state politics and concentrated on his literary pursuits. He authored a translation of Kambar's Ramayana in English and followed it with English translations of the Sanskrit Ramayana and Mahabharata.

In 1956, Rajaji resigned from the Indian National Congress and formed the Congress Reform Committee along with some of his followers. He came to an understanding with his former adversary, Forward Bloc leader U. Muthuramalingam Thevar, in forming an anti-Congress front. The two parties contested the elections jointly. In September 1956, the Congress Reform Committee was renamed the Indian National Democratic Congress. In July 1957, Rajaji created the Swatantra Party. He attacked the license-permit Raj, the complex post-World War Two bureaucracy introduced by Nehru's government that regulated business activity, fearing its potential for corruption and stagnation notwithstanding public support for Nehru's government. He wrote in his newspaper Swarajya

Encouraging competition in industry and giving incentives for higher production are good for the public as well as for the private interests. I want an India where talent and energy can find scope for play without having to cringe and obtain special individual permission from officials and ministers, and where their efforts will be judged by the open market in India and abroad. ...I want the inefficiency of public management to go where the competitive economy of private management can look after affairs. ...I want the corruptions of the permit-license-raj to go. ...I want the officials appointed to administer laws and policies to be free from pressures of the bosses of the ruling party, and gradually restored back to the standards of fearless honesty which they once

maintained. ...I want real equal opportunities for all and no private monopolies created by the permit-license- raj. ...I want the money power of big business to be isolated from politics. ...I want an India where dharma once again rules the hearts of men and not greed.

Prominent individuals affiliated with the Swatantra Party included K.M. Munshi, Prof. N.G. Ranga, Minoo Masani, H.M. Patel, V.P. Menon and Maharani Gayatri Devi, the Queen of Jaipur. Beginning in the early 1960s the Congress base in Madras state began to erode. The decline was partly due to the entry of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam into the political arena, and partly due to increasing corruption in the Congress. Rajaji capitalized on the weakness of his adversary and strengthened the Swatantra Party. Rajaji criticized India's use of military force against Goa. Referring to India's acts of international diplomacy, he said that India "has totally lost the moral power to raise her voice against the use of military power."

After independence the Indian government had declared in its Constitution that Hindi was to be the official language of the country, along with English, but because of objections in non-Hindi areas had allowed for a fifteen-year period for the requirement to be phased in. From 26 January 1965 onwards, Hindi was to be made the sole official language of the Indian Union and people in non-Hindi speaking regions were compelled to learn Hindi. This was vehemently opposed and just before Republic Day, severe anti-Hindi revolts broke out in Madras State. Rajaji reversed his earlier position in support of Hindi and took a strongly anti-Hindi stand in support of the protests. On 17 January 1965, he convened the Madras state Anti-Hindi conference in Tiruchirapalli. He angrily declared that the Part XVII of the Constitution of India which declared that Hindi was the official language should "be heaved and thrown into the Arabian Sea."

In 1967 the fourth general elections were held in Madras state. At the age of 89, Rajaji worked to forge a united opposition to the Indian National Congress by forming an alliance between the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Swatantra Party and the Forward Bloc. The Congress party was defeated in its first defeat in Madras in 30 years as the coalition led by Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was elected to power. C. N. Annadurai became Chief Minister of Madras state, serving from 1967 to 1969. During this period he changed the name of the state to Tamil Nadu and introduced reforms in the administration. Annadurai died in 1969 and was succeeded by M. Karunanidhi.

The Swatantra party also did well in elections in other states and to the Lok Sabha, the directly elected lower house of the Parliament of India. It won 45 Lok Sabha members in the 1967 general elections and emerged as the single largest opposition party. It was the principal opposition party in the states of Rajasthan and Gujarat. It formed a coalition government in Orissa. It also had a significant presence in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar. In the mid 1960s it won

nearly 207 legislative assembly seats all over India, compared to 153 for the Communists, 149 for the socialists and 115 for the Jan Sangh. But the Party started to disintegrate after the death of Rajaji. It finally merged with Charan Singh's Bharatiya Lok Dal in 1974.

In the 1971 Lok Sabha elections, Rajaji organized a united right-wing opposition to Indira Gandhi. The opposition once again created a major impact as it had during the 1967 elections. However, the Indian National Congress government was left unscathed and its majority had considerably increased compared to the 1967 elections, in large part because of the impact of Gandhi's Garibi Hatao anti-poverty program. In his later years, Rajaji was opposed to the repeal of prohibition in Tamil Nadu by the Karunanidhi government. As a result, the Swatantra Party withdrew its support for the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam during the 1972 state elections and Rajaji strongly opposed some of the government's policies.

By November 1972, Rajaji's health began to decline. On 17 December 1972, a week after celebrating his 94th birthday, Rajaji was admitted to General Hospital with uraemia, dehydration and urinary infection. At hospital, he was visited by Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, V. R. Nedunchezhiyan, V. V. Giri, Periyar and other state and national leaders. Rajaji's condition deteriorated in the following days as he frequently lost consciousness. Rajaji died at 5:44 p.m. on 25 December 1972 at the age of 94. His son C. R. Narasimhan was beside him at the time of his death reading to him verses from a Hindu holy book.

2. In the Path of Mahatma

Gandhi first employed non-violent civil disobedience while an expatriate lawyer in South Africa, during the resident Indian community's struggle for civil rights. After his return to India in 1915, he organized protests by peasants, farmers, and urban labourers concerning excessive land-tax and discrimination. After assuming leadership of the Indian National Congress in 1921, Gandhi led nationwide campaigns to ease poverty, expand women's rights, build religious and ethnic amity, end untouchability, and increase economic self-reliance. Above all, he aimed to achieve Swaraj or the independence of India from foreign domination. Gandhi famously led his followers in the Non-cooperation movement that protested the British-imposed salt tax with the 240 miles Dandi Salt March in 1930. Later he campaigned against the British to Quit India. Gandhi spent a number of years in jail in both South Africa and India.

As a practitioner of ahimsa, he swore to speak the truth and advocated that others do the same. Gandhi lived modestly in a self-sufficient residential community and wore the traditional Indian dhoti and shawl, woven with yarn he had hand spun on a charkha. He ate simple vegetarian food, and also undertook long fasts as a means of both self-purification and social protest.

Salt Satyagraha

The Salt Satyagraha was a campaign of nonviolent protest against the British salt tax in colonial India which began with the Salt March to Dandi on March 12, 1930. It was the first act of organized opposition to British rule after Purna Swaraj, the declaration of independence by the Indian National Congress. Mahatma Gandhi led the Dandi march from his Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi, Gujarat to produce salt without paying the tax, with growing numbers of Indians joining him along the way. When Gandhi broke the salt laws in Dandi at the conclusion of the march on April 6, 1930, it sparked large scale acts of civil disobedience against the British Raj salt laws by millions of Indians.

Gandhi was arrested on May 5, 1930, just days before his planned raid on the Dharasana Salt Works. The Dandi March and the ensuing Dharasana Satyagraha drew worldwide attention to the Indian independence movement through extensive newspaper and newsreel coverage. The satyagraha against the salt tax continued for almost a year, ending with Gandhi's release from jail and negotiations with Viceroy Lord Irwin at the Second Round Table Conference. Over 80,000 Indians were jailed as a result of the Salt Satyagraha. The campaign had a significant effect on changing world and British attitudes toward Indian independence, and caused large numbers of Indians to actively join the fight for the first time, but failed to win major concessions from the British.

The Salt Satyagraha campaign was based upon Gandhi's principles of nonviolent protest called satyagraha, which he loosely translated as "truth-force." In early 1930 the Indian National Congress chose satyagraha as their main tactic for winning Indian independence from British rule and appointed Gandhi to organize the campaign. Gandhi chose the 1882 British Salt Act as the first target of satyagraha. The Salt March to Dandi, and the beating of hundreds of nonviolent protesters in Dharasana, demonstrated the effective use of civil disobedience as a technique for fighting social and political injustice.

The Indian National Congress, led by Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, publicly issued the Declaration of Independence, or Purna Swaraj, on January 26, 1930. The declaration included the readiness to withhold taxes, and the statement: 'We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life, so that they may have full opportunities of growth. We believe also that if any government deprives a people of these rights and oppresses them the people have a further right to alter it or abolish it. The British government in India has not only deprived the Indian people of their freedom but has based itself on the exploitation of the masses, and has ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually. We believe therefore, that India must sever the British connection and attain Purna Swaraj or complete independence.'

The Congress Working Committee gave Gandhi the responsibility for organizing the first act of civil disobedience, with Congress itself ready to take charge after Gandhi's expected arrest. Gandhi's plan was to begin civil disobedience with a satyagraha aimed at the British salt tax. The 1882 Salt Act gave the British a monopoly on the collection and manufacture of salt, limiting its handling to government salt depots and levying a salt tax. Violation of the Salt Act was a criminal offense. Even though salt was freely available to those living on the coast (by evaporation of sea water), Indians were forced to purchase it from the colonial government.

Gandhi's choice of the salt tax was met with incredulity by the Working Committee of the Congress, though Gandhi had his reasons for choosing the salt tax. The salt tax was a deeply symbolic choice, since salt was used by nearly everyone in India. It represented 8.2% of the British Raj tax revenue, and most significantly hurt the poorest Indians the most. Gandhi felt that this protest would dramatize Purna Swaraj in a way that was meaningful to the lowliest Indians. He also reasoned that it would build unity between Hindus and Muslims by fighting a wrong that touched them equally.

His first significant attempt in India at leading mass satyagraha was the Non-cooperation movement from 1920-1922. Even though it succeeded in raising millions of Indians in protest against the British created Rowlatt Acts, violence broke out at Chauri Chaura, where a mob killed 22 unarmed policemen.

Gandhi suspended the protest, against the opposition of other Congress members. He decided that Indians were not yet ready for successful nonviolent resistance. The Bardoli Satyagraha in 1928 was much more successful. It succeeded in paralysing the British government and winning significant concessions. More importantly, due to extensive press coverage, it scored a propaganda victory out of all proportion to its size. Gandhi later claimed that success at Bardoli confirmed his belief in Satyagraha and Swaraj: "It is only gradually that we shall come to know the importance of the victory gained at Bardoli...Bardoli has shown the way and cleared it. Swaraj lies on that route, and that alone is the cure..." Gandhi recruited heavily from the Bardoli Satyagraha participants for the Dandi march, which passed through many of the same villages that took part in the Bardoli protests.

On February 5, newspapers reported that Gandhi would begin civil disobedience by defying the salt laws. The salt satyagraha would begin on March 12 and end in Dandi with Gandhi breaking the salt act on April 6. Gandhi chose April 6 to launch the mass breaking of the salt laws for a symbolic reason—it was the first day of "National Week", begun in 1919 when Gandhi conceived of the national hartal against the Rowlatt Act.

Gandhi prepared the worldwide media for the march by issuing regular statements from Sabarmati, at his regular prayer meetings and through direct contact with the press. Expectations were heightened by his repeated statements anticipating arrest, and his increasingly dramatic language as the hour approached: "We are entering upon a life and death struggle, a holy war; we are performing an all-embracing sacrifice in which we wish to offer ourselves as oblation." Correspondents from dozens of Indian, European, and American newspapers, along with film companies, responded to the drama and began actively covering the event.

For the march itself, Gandhi wanted the strictest discipline and adherence to satyagraha and ahimsa. For that reason, he recruited the marchers not from Congress Party members, but from the residents of his own ashram, who were trained in Gandhi's strict standards of discipline. The 23 day march would pass through 4 districts and 48 villages. The route of the march, along with each evening's stopping place, was planned ahead of time based on recruitment potential, past contacts, and timing. Gandhi sent scouts to each village ahead of the march so he could plan his talks at each resting place, based on the needs of the local residents. Events at each village were scheduled and publicized in Indian and foreign press.

On March 12, 1930, Gandhi and 78 male satyagrahis set out on foot for the coastal village of Dandi, Gujarat, over 240 miles from their starting point at Sabarmati Ashram. According to The Statesman, the official government newspaper which usually played down the size of crowds at Gandhi's functions, 100,000 people crowded the road that separated Sabarmati from

Ahmedabad. The first day's march of 13 miles ended in the village of Aslali, where Gandhi spoke to a crowd of about 4,000. At Aslali, and the other villages that the march passed through, volunteers collected donations, registered new satyagrahis, and received resignations from village officials who chose to end cooperation with British rule.

As they entered each village, crowds greeted the marchers, beating drums and cymbals. Gandhi gave speeches attacking the salt tax as inhuman, and the salt satyagraha as a poor man's battle. Each night they slept in the open, asking of the villagers nothing more than simple food and a place to rest and wash. Gandhi felt that this would bring the poor into the battle for independence, necessary for eventual victory.

Thousands of satyagrahis and leaders like Sarojini Naidu joined him. Every day, more and more people joined the march. At Surat, they were greeted by 30,000 people. When they reached the railhead at Dandi, more than 50,000 were gathered. Gandhi gave interviews and wrote articles along the way. Foreign journalists made him a household name in Europe and America. The New York Times wrote almost daily about the Salt March, including two front page articles on April 6 and April 7. Near the end of the march, Gandhi declared, "I want world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might."

The following morning, after a prayer, Gandhi raised a lump of salty mud and declared, "With this, I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire." He then boiled it in seawater, producing illegal salt. He implored his thousands of followers to likewise begin making salt along the seashore, "wherever it is convenient" and to instruct villagers in making illegal, but necessary, salt.

Mass civil disobedience spread throughout India as millions broke the salt laws by making salt or buying illegal salt. Salt was sold illegally all over the coast of India. A pinch of salt made by Gandhi himself sold for 1,600 rupees, that is, $750 at the time. In reaction, the British government incarcerated over sixty thousand people by the end of the month.

What had begun as a Salt Satyagraha quickly grew into a mass Satyagraha. British cloth and goods were boycotted. Unpopular forest laws were defied in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Central Provinces. Gujarati peasants refused to pay tax, under threat of losing their crops and land. In Midnapore, Bengalis took part by refusing to pay the chowkidar tax. The British responded with more laws, including censorship of correspondence and declaring the Congress and its associate organizations illegal. None of those measures slowed the civil disobedience movement.

In Peshawar, satyagraha was led by a Muslim Pashto disciple of Gandhi, Ghaffar Khan, who had trained a 50,000 member army of nonviolent activists called Khudai Khidmatgar. On April 23, 1930, Ghaffar Khan was arrested. A

crowd of Khudai Khidmatgar gathered in Peshawar's Kissa Khani Bazaar. The British ordered troops to open fire with machine guns on the unarmed crowd, killing an estimated 200-250. The Pashtun satyagrahis acted in accord with their training in nonviolence, willingly facing bullets as the troops fired on them. One British Indian Army regiment, troops of the renowned Royal Garhwal Rifles, refused to fire at the crowds. The entire platoon was arrested and many received heavy penalties, including life imprisonment.

The civil disobedience in 1930 marked the first time women became mass participants in the struggle for freedom. Thousands of women, from large cities to small villages, became active participants in satyagraha. Gandhi had asked that only men take part in the salt march, but eventually women began manufacturing and selling salt throughout India. Usha Mehta, an early Gandhian activist, remarked that "Even our old aunts and great-aunts and grandmothers used to bring pitchers of salt water to their houses and manufacture illegal salt. And then they would shout at the top of their voices: 'We have broken the salt law!'" The growing number of women in the fight for independence was a "new and serious feature" according to Lord Irwin. A government report on the involvement of women stated "thousands of them emerged....from the seclusion of their homes...in order to join Congress demonstrations and assist in picketing: and their presence on these occasions made the work the police was required to perform particularly unpleasant."

There were outbreaks of violence in Kolkata, Karachi, and Gujarat. Unlike his suspension of satyagraha after violence broke out during the Non-cooperation movement, this time Gandhi was "unmoved". Appealing for violence to end, at the same time Gandhi honoured those killed in Chittagong and congratulated their parents "for the finished sacrifices of their sons.... A warrior's death is never a matter for sorrow."

Gandhi himself avoided further active involvement after the march, though he stayed in close contact with the developments throughout India. He created a temporary ashram near Dandi. From there, he urged women followers in Mumbai to picket liquor shops and foreign cloth. He said that "a bonfire should be made of foreign cloth. Schools and colleges should become empty."

For his next major action, Gandhi decided on a raid of the Dharasana Salt Works in Gujarat. He wrote to Lord Irwin, again telling him of his plans. Around midnight of May 4, as Gandhi was sleeping on a cot in a mango grove, the District Magistrate of Surat drove up with two Indian officers and thirty heavily-armed constables. He was arrested under an 1827 regulation calling for the jailing of people engaged in unlawful activities, and held without trial near Pune.

Nehru considered Salt Satyagraha the high water mark of his association with Gandhi, and felt that its lasting importance was in changing the attitudes of

Indians: 'Of course these movements exercised tremendous pressure on the British Government and shook the government machinery. But the real importance, to my mind, lay in the effect they had on our own people, and especially the village masses....Non-cooperation dragged them out of the mire and gave them self-respect and self-reliance....They acted courageously and did not submit so easily to unjust oppression; their outlook widened and they began to think a little in terms of India as a whole....It was a remarkable transformation and the Congress, under Gandhi's leadership, must have the credit for it.'

Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha

In Tamil Nadu, Rajaji led the salt satyagraha at Vedaranyam. From Trichi nearly 100 patriots headed by Rajaji marched to Vedaranyam. Leaders like Sardar Vedharatanam Pillai, T.S.S.Rajan, Srimathi Ruckmani Lakshmipathy took part in this salt satyagraha. It created awareness among the people against the British Government. Many people like Rajaji, K.Kamaraj were arrested when they disobeyed the British government.

The Vedaranyam Salt March led by Rajaji in April 1930, though less known, is comparable to Mahatma Gandhi's Dandi March. Rajaji led 100 chosen Congress volunteers to walk 150 miles in 15 days from Tiruchirapalli to Vedaranyam, then in Thanjavur District, to make salt at the seashore and defy British Government's prohibition of its manufacture without licence. Known as the Vedaranyam Salt Satyagraha, it was a landmark event in the annals of freedom movement in South India. The peace brigade braved all the hazards of Government's repressive measures, lathi blows, prohibitory orders, arrests and imprisonment.

Gandhiji himself was arrested a month later, on May 5, 1930. But it was only in Tamil Nadu that a march comparable to Gandhiji's Dandi March was organised and executed with success under Rajaji. The non-violent orchestration of the March to Vedaranyam in 15 days evoked spontaneous response from the people en-route and kindled national spirit all over the then Madras Province.

The Vedaranyam salt satyagraha was well planned in advance. For three weeks before the march, Rajaji undertook a quick tour of Tamil districts, apprising the people on the implication of the forthcoming salt satyagraha. Applicants for the proposed March were meticulously screened and only those with avowed adherence in non-violence and discipline were considered. At 5.00 a.m. on April 13, 1930, the satyagrahis marched out of the spacious lawns of T.S.S. Rajan's bungalow in Tiruchi cantonment area, Rajaji leading the procession.

C.R. had not walked long when he was shown the morning's paper carrying Thorne's (J.A. Thorne, I.C.S., District Collector) order against harbouring the unlawful satyagrahis. Without pausing or slowing down, C.R. dictated a fresh

answer to the accompanying press reporters. He knew, he said, his people and their tradition of hospitality better than a British Officer did. The order, he predicted, would enlarge the public welcome. With a twinkle he added, 'Thorns and thistles cannot stem this tide of freedom,' thus, punning upon the District Collector Thorne's name.

G. Ramachandran, who participated in the March, gives the following account: 'Rajaji's trust in the people was more than justified by events. They rose everywhere to receive the satyagrahis and shower hospitality on them, unmindful of legal action against them. At Vedaranyam, there was a mighty crowd, and scores of garlands and public addresses awaited him.'

After wending their way through towns and villages on the 150-mile long route in 15 days, the marchers reached Vedaranyam on the evening of April 28, 1930. Fearing arrest and imprisonment for harbouring satyagrahis, the local landlords refused to accommodate the marchers in the traveller's inns under their control. At that critical hour, it was Vedarathnam Pillai, a 33-year old Congressman belonging to a local business family, who made arrangements for their stay and food, defying the ban. Hurriedly destroying vast stretches of tobacco plantation owned by him, Vedarathnam Pillai erected a huge pandal with thatched sheds. Much later, he was arrested and saltpans owned by him were confiscated. Along with Rajaji, about 120 satyagrahis stayed in this makeshift camp, which was named Satyagraha Ashram. A group of seven persons who had specially come from Rangoon to participation in the Satyagraha joined the volunteers.

As announced earlier, the first batch of 10 satyagrahis led by Rajaji was to pick up salt on April 30, 1930. But, the time and spot was not made public with a view to hoodwink the police from preventing the event. At 3.30 a.m. that day, Rajaji and his 10-member group were stealthily led in darkness through a short-cut to reach the salt marsh at Agastiampatti, two miles away from Vedaranyam. When Rajaji and others collected salt, it was already 6.00 a.m. A posse of policemen headed by a superintendent of police reached the spot and arrested Rajaji alone. In the afternoon, he was produced before the local magistrate and was sentenced to six months simple imprisonment with a fine of Rs. 200, or another three months in jail. Rajaji preferred additional three months. He was whisked away to Tiruchirapalli by train.

Public meetings and assembly of five or more person were banned in Vedaranyam. On subsequent days, K. Santhanam, Mattaparai Venkatarama Iyer, K.S. Subramaniam and G. Ramachandran were successively appointed as sarvadhikaris. All of them were promptly arrested and sentenced to six-month imprisonment. The remaining satyagrahis, joined by others, continued their non-violent struggle for a whole month, till the end of May 1930. In the last days of the struggle, police rode roughshod over the satyagrahis who refused to part with the contraband salt. The volunteers were bodily removed from the Ashram and thrown out. Madurai A. Vaidyanatha Iyer and Dr. Rukhmini

Lakshmipathy who came to the Satyagraha camp were roughed up and dragged out. N.S. Varadachari and A. Vaidyanatha Iyer were among those who were beaten up.

More and more Congress workers from different districts joined the fray. On the last day, police raided the Satyagraha Ashram and arrested all the 300 leaderless satyagrahis en masse and razed the pandal. All of them were later sentenced to one-year rigorous imprisonment.

Rajaji emerged from the Vedaranyam Satyagraha as a national hero. He drew from the people not only co-operation in action but also allegiance to Gandhian ideas. (P.N. Srinivasan, 75-year-old freedom fighter and Chairman of Gandhi Darsan Kendra, is gearing up to re-enact Vedaranyam salt march on the same route from April 13 to mark the 75th anniversary of the event).

Constructive Programme

Gandhiji's constructive programme was the instrument of creative revolution. Gandhi's creative revolution was a political, economic, educational, social and moral revolution - the grandest creative revolution the world has ever seen culminating in one of the greatest political triumphs of history- without blood-shed and without rancour. For half a century and more the Gandhian Constructive Programme was the only testament of hope for our village masses and they have never once gone back to their earlier past of despair. The Constructive Programme is central to the understanding of Gandhi's concept of Swaraj. In short, Constructive Programme was a revolutionary programme which changed the landscape of life.

It is performed on its own accord. It is purely a moral action which strengthens morality in man. Co-operation and mutual aid are the importance of constructive work. Volunteering is the core of constructive activities. Self-reliance and self-help is another important principle of Constructive Programme. The principle of Constructive Programme is building from below. Constructive Programme is the concrete expression of the spirit of non-violence. Decentralisation is another important principle of Constructive Programme.

Tiruchengode Gandhi Ashram

Seventy five years of dedicated and sustained humanitarian service in the harsh environs of a drought prone rural area points to the grit and greatness of Tiruchengode Gandhi Ashram. The ashram, inseparably linked with the sweat and toil of Rajaji, stands a testimony to his undaunted service and unbounded love to the Pudupalayam villagers. Rajaji intuitively understood the potential and challenge of these ethical concepts to give a concerted direction and collective leadership to the freedom movement.

Discarding his prosperous legal practice in Madras city, Rajaji unobtrusively moved to a remote village with a spirit of self-denial and seclusion to look after the welfare of the indigent people. He plunged himself into the constructive programme touching the bare needs of the impoverished villagers. Rajaji built the ashram on a donated piece of land by his family friend, Pudupalayam Zamindar Ratnasabapathy Gounder. The ashram came into existence on February 6, 1925.

With a band of disciplined and dedicated workers, Rajaji concentrated his village upliftment work in and around Tiruchengode on Khadi production, prohibition and Harijan welfare. Rajaji lived for nearly 10 years in a little thatched hut inside the ashram campus with his family. His daughter, Namagiri, was his sole companion and caretaker - from the ashram mud hut to the New Delhi Rashtrapathi Bhavan. C. R. Narashiman carried on his father's mission and task which is now steered by Justice Sengottuvelan. Soundara Kailasam, an ashram inmate of the earlier days, says that the very memory of Rajaji's life and work in the nucleus of the Gandhi Ashram is elevating and encouraging to anyone who understands the pragmatic link between constructive work and the power of Sathyagraha.

Rajaji exhorted the home truth to constructive workers: 'It is not often realised that untouchability work among the villagers differs fundamentally from that in the urban areas. Here reason and propoganda are utterly futile against the walls of ignorance and superstition. No frontal attack is possible. The only means of work that is possible are personal example and social uplift work among the depressed classes.' If only this truism is realised and put into practice in all the human development programmes, soon there will come peace and harmony in our community life. Around the campus on display are the placards and educative slogans coined by Rajaji himself to arouse the villagers' change of heart to accept their untouchable brethren as one among them, to eschew drinking habits, take to Charka and Khadi spinning for earning enough money - all geared for the welfare of the family and village.

This ashram enunciating such lofty ideals by humane Rajaji is a veritable learning oasis for the Sarvodaya workers and a beacon light house for nation builders and leaders. Bapu and Kasturba came twice in 1925 and 1934 as ashram guests. The rank and file of the freedom movement leaders and volunteers constitute a list of distinguished visitors including Pandit Nehru, Bapu Rajendra Prasad, Vallabhai Patel and philanthropists like G. D. Birla and Seth Jamnalal Bajaj. Sri K. Santhanam and T. Sadasivam were longtime inmates of the ashram. Kalki Krishnamurthy was the resident editor of the Prohibition Tamil journal Vimochanam.

The first ever Sarvodaya workers conference was held in the ashram in July 1940 convened by Rev. Keithan, an American missionary turned Gandhian. N. S. Varadachari and Elai Alwar were Rajaji's Khadi ambassadors to improve

rural economics with J. C. Kumarappa Sri G. Ramachandran and Dr. T. S. Soundram, founders of Gandhigram at Madurai, were schooled in this ashram, under the tutelage of Rajaji, and sponsored by Gandhiji himself. I was fortunate to make most of my education and career in Gandhigram with the profound filial affection of Mama and Amma. I also had a blessed opportunity to come into close contact with Rajaji's younger generation workers who moulded my personality, probity and integrity. I owe the fulfillment of my life long career in rural health and development to my Gandhigram experience. The Hindu Kasturiranga Iyengar, Salem Vijayaraghavachariyar, Madras Mayor Sathyamurthy, Rt. Hon'ble Srinivasa Sastry, Madurai Vaidyanatha Iyer and a host of others were the patrons and well-wishers of the ashram. Rajaji's farewell visit to the ashram was in 1962.

N. S. Varadachari gave a very reverential and intimate tribute on Rajaji's 93rd birthday. 'Politics apart, Rajaji is a scholar of distinction. His stay in prison at the Tiruchengode Ashram and his occasional retirement from the heat of politics helped him to devote to a study of Sanskrit, Tamil and English literature thus facilitating him to write a number of short stories and render English and Tamil translations of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Upanishads, Gita and Kural. The depth of his understanding, the care with which he chooses his words and phrases and the limpid style he adopts, give his writings the odour of true culture. Rajaji is the personification of both goodness and greatness marching in step.' E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, graced the inaugural function of the ashram in 1925. Kamaraja Nadar presided over the golden jubilee. The Vice-President, R. Venkataraman, inaugurated the diamond jubilee.

3. The Policy Trap

The Indian National Congress was elected to power in 1937 for the first time in Madras Presidency, a province of British India; with the exception of the six years when Madras was in a state of Emergency, ruled the Presidency until India became independent on 15 August 1947. Rajagopalachari was the first Premier of Madras Presidency from the Congress party. The cabinet of Rajaji consists of the following members. C. Rajagopalachari (Premier), Tanguturi Prakasam (Revenue), Paramasiva Subbarayan (Law and Education), Varahagiri Venkata Giri (Labour and Industries), Bezawada Gopala Reddy (Local Administration), T.S.S. Rajan (Public Health and Religious Endowments), Maulana Yakub Hasan Sait (Public Works), V. I. Munuswamy Pillai (Agriculture and Rural Development), S. Ramanathan Pillai (Public Information).

Rajagopalachari issued the Temple Entry Authorization and Indemnity Act 1939 by which restrictions were removed on Dalits and Shanars entering Hindu temples. In the same year, the Meenakshi temple at Madurai was also opened to the Dalits and Shanars. Rajaji also introduced prohibition, and also a sales tax to compensate for the loss of government revenue that resulted from prohibition. Because of the revenue decline resulting from prohibition the Provincial Government shut down hundreds of government-run primary schools. Rajaji's political opponents alleged that this decision deprived many low-caste and Dalit students of their education. Rajaji's opponents also assigned casteist motives to his government's implementation of Gandhi's Wardha scheme into the education system.

Rajagopalachari's rule is largely remembered however for compulsory introduction of Hindi in educational institutions, which made him highly unpopular. This measure sparked off widespread anti-Hindi protests, which led to violence in some places. Over 1,200 men, women and children were jailed for participating in these protests. Two protesters, Thalamuthu Nadar and Natarasan, were killed. In 1940, Congress ministers resigned protesting the declaration of war on Germany without their consent, and the Governor took over the reins of the administration. The unpopular law was eventually repealed by the Governor of Madras on 21 February 1940. Despite the numerous shortcomings, Madras under Rajagopalachari was still regarded as the best administered province in British India.

Hindi imposition in Tamil Nadu started in 1937 when the Congress Government of the Madras Presidency under C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) made Hindi a compulsory subject in schools. The British were still the rulers of the Indian subcontinent at that time but elected local governments in the Provinces were installed under the British rule. Madras Presidency was a province that included much of present Tamil Nadu and parts of present Andhra Pradesh.

Tamils opposed Hindi imposition immediately and Sir A. T. Panneerselvam and E.V. Ramaswamy organized anti-Hindi imposition protests in 1938. More than 1200 people, including women and children, were imprisoned in 1938, of which two, Thalamuthu and Natarasan, lost their lives. In 1939 the Rajaji government quit due to the decision of the Indian National Congress to protest India's participation in World War II. The teaching of Hindi was withdrawn in 1940 by the British governor. Rajagopalachari, however, relented and opposed the introduction of Hindi during the 1965 agitations. On January 17, 1965, he convened the Madras state Anti-Hindi conference in Tiruchirapalli in which he angrily declared that the Part XVII of the Constitution of India which declared that Hindi was the official language should "be heaved and thrown into the Arabian Sea."

The slogan "Tamil Nadu for Tamilians" was first raised in 1938 in protest against the introduction of Hindi in schools. Opposition to the linguistic domination of Hindi was one of the programs of the Self-Respect Movement ever since its genesis. Previously, Periyar gave a warning in a 1926 article of the Kudi Arasu that Hindi would develop as one of the dangers confronting the non-Brahmin community and that it would help only religious propaganda by the Brahmins. In another editorial of the Kudi Arasu in 1929, he questioned the wisdom of spreading the knowledge of Hindi, a language that had no connection to Tamils and was of no utility, an Aryan language that taught only superstitious legends and customs and the superiority of Brahmins.

He reasoned that the adoption of Hindi would make Tamils subordinate to Hindi-speaking North Indians. Periyar also considered Tamil to be the desirable language for development of Tamil people. His contention was that it was a conspiracy of Tamil Brahmins and North Indians to destroy the Dravidian art and culture through Hindi language and impose those of the Aryan and thereby re-establish the Varnashramadharma and suppress the Dravidians as the Khastriyas of the varna order, degrade the Adi Dravidas as Panchamas and Chandalas, and treat the Christians and Muslims as Mlechas. His conclusions were based on the fact that Rajagopalachari who introduced compulsory teaching of Hindi in Madras Presidency as well as most of his colleagues in the Indian National Congress were Tamil Brahmins. Periyar explained that Hindi would not only halt the progress of Tamilians but would completely destroy their culture and nullify the progressive ideas that had been successfully inculcated through Tamil in the recent decades.

Periyar stated that if the North Indian quits, the Tamil Brahmin will remain silent. Then they will themselves bid good-bye to castes. The foremost duty today is rooting out Hindi because it was imposed with the motive of installing North Indian domination.

As soon as the Second World War broke out Rajaji resigned as Premier along with other members of his cabinet to protest the declaration of war by the

Viceroy of India. Rajaji was arrested in December 1940 in accordance with the Defence of India rules and sentenced to one-year in prison. However, subsequently Rajaji differed in opinion over opposition to British war effort. He opposed the Quit India Movement that Gandhi had initiated in 1942 to pressure the British government to grant independence, and instead advocated dialogue with the British. He reasoned that passivity and neutrality would be harmful to India's interests when the country was threatened with invasion. He also advocated dialogue with the Muslim League, which was demanding the partition of India. He resigned from the party and the assembly following differences over resolutions passed by the Madras Congress legislative party and with the leader of the Madras provincial Congress K. Kamaraj.

With the end of the war came in 1945, elections were held in the Madras Presidency in 1946. Kamaraj, the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee backed Tanguturi Prakasam as the Chief Ministerial candidate to prevent Rajaji from coming to power. Rajaji, however, did not contest the elections and Prakasam was elected.

In the last years of the war, Rajaji was instrumental in negotiations between Gandhi and Jinnah. In 1944, he proposed a solution to the Indian Constitutional tangle. In the same year, Rajaji proposed that 55% be the absolute majority threshold for deciding whether a district should be a part of India or Pakistan, triggering a huge controversy among nationalists. From 1946 to 1947, Rajaji served as the Minister for Industry, Supply, Education and Finance in the Interim Government headed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

When India attained independence on 15 August 1947, the British province of Bengal was divided into West Bengal and East Bengal, with West Bengal becoming part of India and East Bengal part of Pakistan. With the support of Jawaharlal Nehru, Rajaji was appointed the first Governor of West Bengal.

Rajaji was disliked by Bengalis for his criticism of Subhash Chandra Bose during the 1938 Tripuri Congress session. His appointment was unsuccessfully opposed by Subhash's brother Sarat Chandra Bose. During his tenure as Governor, Rajaji's priorities were dealing with refugees and bringing peace and stability in the aftermath of the Calcutta riots. He declared his commitment to neutrality and justice at a meeting of Muslim businessmen: "Whatever may be my defects or lapses, let me assure you that I shall never disfigure my life with any deliberate acts of injustice to any community whatsoever." Rajaji was also strongly opposed to proposals to include areas from Bihar and Orissa in the province of West Bengal. To one such proposal by the editor of an important newspaper, he replied: "I see that you are not able to restrain the policy of agitation over inter-provincial boundaries. It is easy to yield to current pressure of opinion and it is difficult to impose on enthusiastic people any policy of restraint. But I earnestly plead that we should do all we can to prevent ill-will from hardening into a chronic disorder. We have enough ill-will and prejudice

to cope with. Must we hasten to create further fissiparous forces?" Rajaji was highly regarded and respected by Chief Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghosh and the state cabinet.

From 10 November 1947 to 24 November 1947, Rajaji served as Acting Governor-General of India in the absence of Lord Mountbatten of Burma, who was on leave in England to attend the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to Mountbatten's nephew Prince Philip. Rajaji led a very simple life in the viceregal palace, washing his clothes and polishing his own shoes. Mountbatten was so impressed with Rajaji's abilities that when he was to leave India in June 1948 Rajaji was his second choice to succeed him after Vallabhbhai Patel. Rajaji was eventually chosen as the Governor-General when Nehru disagreed with Mountbatten's first choice, as did Patel himself. Rajaji was initially hesitant but accepted when Nehru wrote to him, "I hope you will not disappoint us. We want you to help us in many ways. The burden on some of us is more than we can carry." Rajaji served as Governor-General of India from June 1948 to 26 January 1950 and was not only the last Governor-General of India but the only Indian Governor-General of India.

By the end of the year 1949, it was assumed that Rajaji, already Governor-General, would continue as President. Backed by Nehru, Rajaji wanted to stand for the presidential election but later withdrew, due to the opposition of a section of the Indian National Congress mostly made up of North Indians who were concerned about Rajaji's non-participation during the Quit India Movement.

In 1950 Rajaji joined the Union Cabinet as Minister without Porfolio, at Nehru's invitation. In 1951 he was put in charge of Home Affairs, serving as the country's Home Minister for nearly 10 months. He warned Nehru about the expansionist designs of China and expressed regret over the Tibet problem, his views being shared with his predecessor Sardar Patel. He also expressed concern over demands made to establish new linguistically-based states, arguing that they would generate differences amongst the people.

In the 1952 elections the Congress Party was reduced to a minority in the State Assembly, and the coalition led by the Communist Party of India appeared to be in a better position to form the government. Governor Sri Prakasa nominated Rajaji to the Legislative Council without the advice of the Council of Ministers, and appointed Rajagopalchari as non-elected Chief Minister. A further maneuver to secure a majority involved luring opposition Members of the Legislative Assembly to join the party. Nehru was furious and wrote to Rajaji that "the one thing we must avoid giving is the impression that we stick to office and we want to keep others out at all costs." Rajaji refused to contest a by-election and remained a non-elected member. P.C. Alexander, a former Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra governor, has described these events as a serious constitutional impropriety.

The following members were included in Rajaji's cabinet during 1952-54: C.Rajagopalachari (Chief Minister, portfolios of public and police), A. B. Shetty (Minister of Health), C. Subramaniam (Minister of Finance, food and elections), K. Venkataswamy Naidu (Minister of Religious Endowments and Registration), N. Ranga Reddi (Minister of Public Works), M. V. Krishna Rao (Minister of Education, Harijan Uplift and Information), V. C. Palanisamy Gounder (Minister of Prohibition), U. Krishna Rao (Minister of Industries, Labour, Motor Transport, Railways, Posts and Telegraphs and Civil Aviation), R. Nagana Goud (Minister of Agriculture, Forests, Veterinary, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Cinchona), N. Sankara Reddi (Minister of Local Administration), M. A. Manickavelu Naicker (Minister of Land Revenue), K. P. Kuttikrishnan Nair (Courts and Prisons and Legal Department), Raja Sri Shanmuga Rajeswara Sethupathi (Minister in charge of house rent control), S. B. P. Pattabhirama Rao (Minister in charge of rural welfare, commercial taxes and scheduled areas), D. Sanjeevayya (Minister in charge of cooperation and housing), The portfolios of Agriculture, Forests, Fisheries, Cinchona, Rural Welfare, Community Projects and National Extension Schemes were handed over to M. Bhaktavatsalam on 9 October 1953. C. Subramaniam was given the additional portfolios of education, information and publicity. V. C. Palaniswamy Gounder was put in charge of Veterinary, Animal Husbandry and Harijan welfare.

During this period Potti Sriramulu called for the creation of a separate Telugu state, to be named Andhra. He went on an unconditional fast until his goal was achieved, dying as a result of the fast. Violent riots broke out in the Telugu areas of Madras State. Nehru had initially warned that this method of fasting to achieve administrative or political changes would put an end to democratic government but after death of Sriramulu, Nehru agreed to the demand for a separate state of Andhra although he refused to include Madras city in Andhra. The State of Andhra was formed out of Madras State in 1953, although Rajaji continued to be disengaged from issues surrounding the new state. Rajaji was accused of not intervening to end the fast or to provide medical help for Sriramulu, even though the fast had continued for over 50 days. Prior to his death only one other person, Jatin Das, had fasted to death in modern Indian history. In most cases fasters either gave up, were hospitalized or were arrested and force fed.

Rajaji said in the Madras Legislative Council on the 12th March 1953 that locating Andhra's capital in Madras would only lead to daily bickerings and quarrels. The Chief Minister said that he could not be blamed for Sriramulu's death. He said, ‘In my view, there are other people responsible for the death of Sriramulu. But it is not useful to point fingers. I, however, reaffirm that self-immolation is not the way to make progress in a democracy. It is anti-democratic and autocratic. It is one man trying to dominate others by his will, apart from the merits of the situation. This is not the first time I am saying this. I

told Mahatma Gandhi same thing. Even a brilliant person, fasting, loses his power of thinking. Fasting unto death should not be encouraged.'

New Scheme of Elementary Education

New Scheme of Elementary Education was an abortive attempt at education reform introduced by Rajaji in 1953. It met with strong opposition organized by the DMK and resulted in the resignation of Rajaji as Chief Minister. The reform attempt was dropped by the Kamaraj Government in 1954, due to public opposition.

The scheme was justified for certain reasons. According to the 1951 Census of India, the literacy rate in the Madras State was 20.86%. During fiscal year 1950-51, the Madras State Government spent Rs.68.79 Crores (11.5 % of total revenue) for Elementary education. The enrollment rate for children of school going age was around 47.8%. The Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution require the Indian state to provide education to all citizens. In accordance to this directive, in 1950 the Madras State's Directorate of Public Instruction prepared a ten year plan to provide education to all children of school going age. This plan called for allocation of Rs. 1,00,00,000 per year for enrolling five lakh additional students for the next ten years. Against this, the actual allocation in 1950-51 was only Rs. 5,00,000. The cost of educating a student was estimated to be around Rs. 22.8 per year out of which the Government's contribution was only Rs. 16.3. Out of 12,22,775 students who had enrolled in standard I in 1946-47 only 4,61,686 (37%) had reached the 5th Standard in 1950-51. It was against this background, Rajaji took power on 10 April, 1952.

As early in 1939, the girl students of 3rd and 4th standards and those belonging to Scheduled Castes had been allowed to attend school for only three hours a day and spend the rest of the day helping their parents. In the academic year 1949-50, during the rule of P. S. Kumaraswamy Raja, an experimental shift system had been introduced in ten taluks and later expanded to other areas as an optional measure. Schools functioned with two shifts and the teachers working both shifts were paid an additional Rs.10 per month. However this system was not widely adopted and by 1951 only 155 elementary schools (out of a total 38,687) in the state were functioning in shifts.

The cost of educating all children in the 6-12 age group would be enormous. Besides enrollment, more than half of the elementary schools lacked proper infrastructure. The reform attempted to increase the number of school going children within the financial limitations faced by the Government. There was an acute shortage of teachers. The state had an average of less than three teachers for five standards per school. There were 4,108 single-teacher schools and more than 60% of the schools with five standards had less than four teachers. This poor student-teacher ratio was putting a strain on the teachers and led to students being made to stay in school for longer hours. This directly

contributed to the high drop out ratio. This plural teaching had to be stopped without hiring new teachers.

Rajaji favoured Gandhi's Basic Education Scheme over the existing elementary education system. He stated that he wanted to reduce the unemployment amongst educated people. The Basic education system called for learning through living and training in self reliance. It was decided that the retention rate of 37% had to be improved by making schools attractive to students of poorer sections.

The Modified Scheme of Elementary education proposed the following changes in the school system. School hours were reduced from five hours to three hours per day. Shift system was introduced. The students were to be divided into two batches and the school would function in two sessions. Each session will be of three hours duration, consisting of four periods of 40 minutes each, with not less than two intervals totaling 20 minutes. The sessions will be arranged to suit local conditions. One batch will attend only one session a day. There were to be six working days per week. No dilution of the previous syllabus and no reduction in duration for subjects like Language, Elementary Mathematics, Nature Study, Drawing, History, Geography, Hygiene, Civics, Moral Instruction and Singing.

The second session in which the students would be out of school was to be utilized for obtaining the objectives of the basic education system, learning through living and training in self-reliance. During the out of school session, the girl students were to learn house keeping from their mothers in their home environment. The boys were supposed to learn from their respective fathers, farming or other crafts. Boys whose parents did not belong to occupational groups were to be sent work in farms or with other craftsmen in their villages. In addition to the learning the students were to be utilized in service to the village like building sheds, laying bricks, attending to village sanitation, improving roads, etc. There were to be no strict attendance or work requirements for the out of school session.

The Rajaji Government introduced the new elementary education scheme in all schools in the rural areas for the academic year 1953-54. It was planned that eventually it would be extended to 35,000 of the total 38,687 schools in the state. However due to public opposition it was put on hold on 29 July 1953 and dropped altogether on 18 May 1954.

From the beginning, the scheme attracted heavy opposition from the Dravidian movement led by Periyar E. V. Ramasamy. The Dravidar Kazhagam organized a conference in Erode protesting the scheme's introduction. The teachers' unions also opposed their move as they were not consulted before implementation. They also resented the increase in working hours without any increase in pay. The DMK seized the opportunity and started a campaign

against the scheme. They dubbed the scheme as the Kula Kalvi Thittam. The Dravidian movement viewed the scheme as an attempt to preserve and perpetuate caste based discrimination through official means.

Rajaji and his education minister Krishna Rao responded with a counter campaign in the scheme's defense. They gave speeches and made broadcasts in the All India Radio explaining their position. The month of June 1953 saw aggressive propaganda efforts by both the proponents and opponents of the scheme. On 13 July 1953, the DMK executive committee met and decided to conduct an agitation outside the Chief Minister's residence. EVK Sampath was nominated to lead the agitation. This agitation was part of a three pronged attack on the Government's policies by the DMK. On 14 July 1953, a possession led by Sathyavani Muthu was organized to protest the scheme. Its destination was Rajaji's official residence at Bazullah road in Thygaraya Nagar. It was stopped by the police as it was unlicensed. The next day the confrontation heated up with the Government introducing a motion in the Legislative Assembly for implementing the scheme from the academic year 1953-54. On the same day another DMK procession was stopped before it could reach Thygaraya Nagar. In the next fifteen days as many twenty such processions were attempted by the DMK.

By the end of July public opinion started to turn against the scheme and at least four public petitions were tabled in the assembly about the scheme. On 29 July 1953, Krishna Rao, the minister for education moved a motion for considering the new scheme. After a discussion, K.P. Gopalan moved a motion to drop the scheme. The house was deadlocked with 138 yes to 138 no's on dropping the scheme. The speaker of the assembly J. Shivashanmugam Pillai used his casting vote to defeat the motion. A second motion to defer the scheme and refer it to a committee of experts was moved by K.R. Viswanatham. This motion passed with 138 yes against 137 no's. The Scheme was stayed and the Parulekar Committee was commissioned to review the scheme.

On 20 August 1953, the Government passed an order (Education GO No. 1888) to constitute a committee of experts for reviewing the scheme. The committee comprised of Prof. R.V. Parulekar, Director of Indian Institute of Education, Bombay, as the Chairman; Dr.B.B. Dey, Retired Director of Public Instruction, Madras; Prof. Mohammad Mujeeb, Vice-Chancellor of the Jamia Millia University as members and S. Govindarajulu Naidu, former Director of Public Instruction, Madras, and then Director of Public Instruction, Andhra Pradesh, as the Member Secretary. The Parulekar committee submitted its report on 23 November 1953. It found the scheme to be sound and endorsed the Government's stand. It made additional recommendations including extending the scheme to municipal areas, opening as many as 4000 new schools, revising the existing curriculum, providing training and remuneration to the craftsmen involved.

The opposition campaign was successful in creating doubts about the scheme in the minds of the general public. There was dissent within the Congress party and Kamaraj wanted Rajaji to withdraw the scheme as it was unpopular amongst the public and with the party members. But Rajaji refused to drop the scheme. Pressure mounted from within the party to drop the scheme. Faced with defeat in the annual election of the Congress Legislative Party, he decided to quit. His preferred successor C. Subramaniam was defeated by Kamaraj in the CLP election on 31 March 1954. Rajaji resigned and Kamaraj took over as chief minister on 13 April 1954. This effectively ended the prospects of the new education scheme. On 18 May 1954, the new education minister C. Subramaniam announced in the assembly that the scheme was being dropped. The reason stated for the dropping was that the necessary acceptance, support and cooperation of the people were not forthcoming for the scheme and the atmosphere was not propitious for the success of the scheme.

Meanwhile the composite Madras State had been reorganized along linguistic lines. The state of Andhra had split from Madras on 1 October 1953. The Andhra Government constituted an Elementary Education Committee with Dr. B Kuppuswamy as chairman to review the elementary education situation. The Kuppuswamy committee report recommended the rejection of the Modified Elementary Education Scheme. In 1954 the Andhra state canceled the scheme.

There were arguments made against the Modified Scheme of Elementary Education. The scheme was considered as casteist by design. It aimed to preserve and perpetuate the caste hierarchy by ensuring that children took up their parents' profession. It was designed to ensure Brahmins alone got positions and authority. It intended to reduce the schooling imparted to children by not monitoring them during out of school sessions. It would increase the workload of teachers as it would increase their working hours and force them to handle more children without the appointment of new teachers and without an increase in their pay. It was undemocratic and dictatorial as Rajaji had not consulted his cabinet or the assembly in his decision to implement the scheme. Rajaji himself declared that the scheme was an executive matter and no law was involved. It was deliberately targeted at rural children alone to keep them from getting an education.

Writing in Viduthalai on 17 November 1953, Periyar denounced the scheme as a Brahiminical conspiracy: “This educational policy is a casteist educational policy. This has to be opposed and abolished...Is this educational scheme not a reconstruction and protection of varnashrama?...who physically labours and slaves in the name of caste? Only we, who are called sudras...should we keep doing the caste occupation while brahmins alone get positions,employment, authority and go higher and higher?...is this justified?...we dont think physical labour is disgraceful, but why should we alone do that work?...How much of opposition to Rajaji’s minister post? Though the situation is such that his post can topple any day. If he can manage all that and still have a tight grip, what is

it for? Only to save his race, only for the protection of the Brahmin society. As long as he is in power, he wants to fill up Brahmins in all the places. He wants to repress the Sudras, and with that motive alone he remains in power. Among us we do not have this mind, this feeling, this racial fanaticism! He fights for the welfare of the Brahmin race..."

In *Viduthalai* on 26 February 1954, he vowed to destroy the scheme by any means: "Rajaji says that people in the villages do not need education. He has said that the student in the village should cut hair, he should wash clothes, and he should make pots and pans. The village school is only for three hours duration, the rest of the time our children should graze donkeys, this is called the New Primary Education Scheme. We organized a conference in Erode only to oppose this educational scheme. Can we keep looking at law and democracy in such a situation? The work will be successful only through a great revolution. Though 100, 1000 of us will have to be sacrificed, we need to be prepared. That is why even I gave a three months notice; and said that if they want to shoot, let them shoot. I am going to start a struggle. This educational scheme has to be destroyed by all means."

He kept up his harangue even after Rajaji resigned and C Subramaniam became the new Education minister. On 17 April 1954 he wrote: "Rajaji did this only because of the fear that the position of his society will disappear. If the Vanaan washes clothes, if the Paraiyan beats the drums, if the Chakkili stitches shoes, if the Ambattan shaves, only then they will get the feeling that they are a low caste. If they also get educated and come ahead, the highness of the upper castes will disappear. So, Rajaji interfered in the basics by introducing a 3-hour occupational education...The servant of this Rajaji, C. Subramanian was the one who raised his hand to say that Sudras don't need communal representation. Those who had gone on the merit of our votes were sitting there like the five Pandavas during Draupadi's disrobing. All this takes place in this country. If it had been another country, four or five (death) anniversaries would have been observed for such people. When it is so, how can we fight legally?"

During and after his tenure as Chief Minister, Rajaji defended his scheme vigorously. He derided the critics as people who did not want to do physical labour: "The opposition to the scheme comes mainly from those who do not want to do any physical labour. There are others who ask whether there will be any examination in the crafts. That may come or may not come. But I would like you to ponder over one factor. Are not the children of parents with an educational tradition at an advantage now over children whose parents have no education at all? Should an examination in crafts be held, will not the children of illiterate artisans score over the other class of children? In that way will not the handicap of the poor man's children be removed? The new system gives a chance to the backward people to progress. I would, therefore, appeal to you all to support the scheme or at least desist from opposing it."

About the casteist angle of the criticism, he reasoned that it was because of him being the author of the scheme: “It is indeed regrettable that it should be said that there is a big conspiracy behind the new scheme. Probably because i am its author, some people suspect there is something behind it...If some other person would have done it, by God's grace, everyone might have accepted it and the scheme might have worked successfully...I made similar suggestions over 30 years ago.”

After the Kamaraj Government scrapped the scheme, he again defended it as: “My plan was based on the conviction - which was confirmed by educational officers of highest rank and experience - that three hours attendance was quite adequate for the purpose and would leave nothing out of the present elementary school instruction.”

Replying to Papanasam MLA Swayam Prakasam's concerns over the scheme, then Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru offered his endorsement to the scheme: “As for the education policy which Rajaji has sponsored, I cannot speak for conditions in Madras. But that policy is an aspect of Basic Education which is the proved policy of our Government. The Madras proposals, as you know, were referred to a special High-powered Committee of Educationists. They expressed their approval of them. ...At the Governors' Conference recently, the Madras proposals were not directly discussed, but the present system was discussed and thoroughly disapproved of and generally the basic system was approved.”

India's President Rajendra Prasad offered his support in a letter written to the Governor of Madras - Sri Prakasa - on 9 June 1953: “I have read with great interest both the speech of Rajaji and the scheme of education in primary schools in rural areas. I have felt great dissatisfaction with the present scheme of things so far as education is concerned... with the large number of graduates and under graduates we are turning out from year to year are without any employment...most of them are unemployable...This scheme fits them at any rate for their parents' work or for the work people have been doing in their own place. With education it may be hoped that they would be able to do that work better. I there look forward with great hope and enthusiasm to this experiment.”

The Central Advisory Board of Education passed a resolution endorsing the scheme during its 21st Meeting held in February 1954: "The Central Advisory Board of Education has given careful consideration to the Modified Scheme of Elementary Education formulated by the Madras Government. It is of the opinion that the Scheme represents a welcome attempt to bring education within the reach of a large majority of children and thus help in the achievement of the constitutional directive about the provision of universal Primary Education. The Board is also satisfied that the reduction of school hours from five to three will not necessarily affect the education of children

adversely, provided the out-of-school activities which are an integral part of the education of children are implemented under controlled conditions. The Board also appreciates the attempt made in the Scheme for bringing education into closer contact with the life of the community and this gives it a practical bias which is at present lacking in ordinary Primary Schools. The Board would, however, like to point out that the arrangements made for the out-of-school activities of the children need to be carefully supervised on the lines suggested by the Parulekar Committee and their success critically assessed from time to time. Further, the Board would like to place on record its definite opinion that this Scheme is valuable as an interim measure only, because, sufficient funds are not at present available for providing education to all the children and that the proper pattern of education for the country is Basic Education which would offer full-time co-related education to children in which teaching of craft as well as of other school subjects will be provided under proper educative conditions in the school itself, which will serve as a community centre where the school and the community are brought into an organic relationship. The Board would also recommend that other States may conduct similar experiments under controlled conditions. (The Madras Government have since intimated their decision to discontinue their modified scheme of Elementary Education)"

The Modified Scheme of Elementary Education even after being dropped had the unintended consequence of bringing primary education to Lakhs of school children in Tamil Nadu. Rajaji's successor Kamaraj was ever mindful of the fact that it was the issue of primary education that caused his predecessor's downfall. Knowing the public opposition to Rajaji's scheme he took the diametrically opposite approach in providing education to Tamil Nadu's children - imparting free and compulsory education till the age of 14. He set up a commission under R.M. Alagappa Chettiar to examine the means for providing compulsory primary education. Instead of sending children away from the school, the committee recommended active Government intervention to bring more children into the schooling system by building new schools and abolishing school fees. This approach was successful and by the end of Kamaraj's tenure as Chief Minister in 1963 enrollment in primary schools had been doubled.

Alienation from Congress

The Congress Reform Committee was formed just one month before the 1957 elections to the Lok Sabha and the Madras state legislative assembly by a group of dissidents that left the Indian National Congress in the Madras State. It was led by Rajaji, who had been defeated by Kamaraj in the inner-party disputes over leadership of the Congress in Tamil Nadu. CRC was formed. It had cooperation with the All India Forward Bloc of U. Muthuramalingam Thevar. The CRC-AIFB combine contested 59 seats in the assembly election in the following manner: 54 candidates from CRC, 5 candidates from AIFB. One of the five AIFB candidates, P.K. Mookiah Thevar, stood as a CRC candidate. There

was also an informal understanding with the Communist Party of India, which decided not to contest against the CRC in some constituencies.

The CRC-AIFB combine formulated a 12-point election manifesto. The CRC-AIFB alliance emerged as the major opposition alliance in these elections, but could not defeat the Congress government. CRC won 14 seats and AIFB three. Half of the seats won were from the Ramnad and Madurai districts.

Following the election, a joint CRC opposition group was formed in the legislative assembly. This was done to counter the bid of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam which had 16 seats to hold the post of leader of opposition. Soon five independent assembly members joined the CRC opposition group. V.K. Ramaswamy Mudaliar was elected leader of the CRC opposition. On September 28-29, 1957 CRC held a state conference and reconstituted itself as the Indian National Democratic Congress. Notably, U. Muthuralingam Thevar, one of the inaugural speakers of the event, was arrested just after having delivered his speech.

In March 1959 elections to the Madurai municipality was held. An alliance of INDC, AIFB, CPI and the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam was formed. Forward Bloc members stood as INDC candidates, denoting that the Tamil Nadu state unit of that party has virtually merged into INDC. 12 INDC candidates, 12 CPI candidates and 2 DMK candidates were elected against only 10 of the Congress. This was the first time the Congress lost its hold over the municipality after Independence. The INDC-AIFB-CPI-DMK front only lost in three constituencies was they had nominated independent candidates.

4. The Swatantra Party

The Swatantra Party was founded by Rajaji and N. G. Ranga in August, 1959. The party opposed the Nehruvian socialist outlook of the Congress Party by advocating free enterprise, opposing the so-called licence-permit Raj, and ending India's economic autarky by courting Western investment. In 1960 Rajaji and other Swatantra leaders wrote about why Swatantra Party had to be formed despite having worked closely with Nehru to obtain independence for India.

The Swatantra Party stands for the protection of the individual citizen against the increasing trespasses of the State. It is an answer to the challenge of the so-called Socialism of the Indian Congress party. It is founded on the conviction that social justice and welfare can be attained through the fostering of individual interest and individual enterprise in all fields better than through State ownership and Government control. It is based on the truth that bureaucratic management leads to loss of incentive and waste of resources. When the State trespasses beyond what is legitimately within its province, it just hands over the management from those who are interested in frugal and efficient management to bureaucracy which is untrained and uninterested except in its own survival.

The Swatantra Party is founded on the claim that individual citizens should be free to hold their property and carry on their professions freely and through binding mutual agreements among themselves and that the State should assist and encourage in every possible way the individual in this freedom, but not seek to replace him.

The new party seeks to oppose the trend of the ruling Congress Party to adopt the ways and ideals of the Communists in its eagerness to prevent the Communists from going forward. The Swatantra party believes that going over to the enemy is not defence, but surrender.

The Swatantra Party, apart from the ideology here explained, hopes to furnish a real opposition to the Congress Party so that parliamentary democracy may be properly balanced. The absence of a true opposition has led to the rapid deterioration of democracy into a kind of totalitarianism. Voices have been heard from all quarters calling for a strong opposition and the new party is supplying a felt want.

This party of freedom is further making a novel experiment in restricting disciplinary control over party members to essential issues, giving freedom in all other matters to vote according to individual opinion. This is not mere strategy to “net in” discordant miscellaneous elements as at first might appear. It is really an answer to the constantly expressed sense of dissatisfaction with

party rigidity, and to the complaint that it often amounts to suppression of opinion and rule by a minority in the name of a majority. A majority in the ruling caucus can always, under present conditions, impose their views on all and every issue in the Parliament of the nation.

The Swatantra Party intends to initiate a departure from the usual practice of political parties and, true to its name, give Swatantra or freedom to its members to vote according to their own convictions and conscience on all but the party's fundamentals so that the decisions of Parliament may on those issues truly reflect the prevailing opinion, and not be just, a replica of the majority opinion of the ruling party or the fads of the ruling clique.

Without the inconveniences resulting from proportional representation and, in particular, the instability of governments formed under such a system, the reduction of voting in accordance with whips to the barest minimum, as proposed by the Swatantra Party would be a healthy example for all parties. If followed generally or even by the more important ones among the various parties, the freedom given to members on all but essential issues would result in government more in accordance with the ideals of those who conceived the system of proportional representation and laid high hopes thereon. In this matter, the new party may claim to have initiated a great democratic advance worthy of trial in all countries really believing in democracy, and not willing to be subjected to a form of dictatorship in the name of party discipline which often serves only the ambition of individuals or groups.

The new party does not believe that legislative compulsion, any more than the violence that preceded and enthroned Communism in certain countries, can contribute to true or lasting human happiness. We must depend on the moral sense of the people in order to equalise without destroying freedom.

It may be that there are a large number of people in our ancient land who have now lost the capacity to respond to moral appeals, who are impervious to the call of dharma. There have been causes that have brought about this state of things. But this large number of bad and successful men of the world should not blind us to the fact that in the large mass, dharma still rules and supports our society. The millions that make up our nation are still moved and guided by their sense of dharma and the voice of their conscience. If the cynics who deny this were right, our society would have broken down long ago and perished. We should have been hearing of starvation deaths in thousands every day. If we take a survey of the numerous charitable foundations and trusts that work as a matter of routine in the country and which were born of a sense of dharma, without any kind of State compulsion, we can cure our cynicism with irrefutable and abundant facts. The charitable motives and compulsions of the heart which prevailed in the days when these trusts and charitable institutions were founded can prevail today, for we are the same people after all.

"There is no need for charity when there is an obligation; let the State compel". This is the slogan of the Socialists. But it is forgotten that this will lead irresistibly to total serfdom.

The cynics are not right. Our society is still maintained by the inner law. The outer laws can touch but the fringe of life. They deal with criminals and keep order going. Normal life 'does hot depend on the laws. It depends on the moral consciousness of people. This moral sense has not been effaced whatever changes may have taken place in the rituals and observances of forms. It is by dharma that society is sustained, Lokah dhriyate. It is on dharma we must build, and not on the sands of material motives and our capacity to satisfy them quickly and get votes to be in power. The good seed is not lost. It is still there. We must not ignore its availability. The soil also is good and God will send us the rains. Let us not fail to look after it.

Principles of Swatantra

The founders of Swatantra Party framed 21 principles broadly based on classical liberal lines. The 21 Principles of the Swatantra Party are:

1. The Swatantra party is pledged to social justice and equality of opportunity for all people without distinction of religion, caste, occupation or political affiliation.

2. The party holds that progress, welfare and happiness of the people depend on individual initiative, enterprise and energy. The party stands for the principle of maximum freedom for the individual and minimum interference by the state consistent with the obligation to prevent and punish anti-social activities, to protect the weaker elements of society, and to create the conditions in which individual initiative will thrive and be fruitful. The party is, therefore opposed to increasing state interference of the kind now being pursued.

3. The party holds that the state would foster and utilities the sense of moral obligation, the pride, satisfaction, and fulfillment felt by individual in serving others which are inherent in our tradition, instead of adopting legislative or other forms of compulsion which commence with want of faith in the people and are consummated in the serfdom of the governed under the official machine, in an omnipotent state controlled by a political party voted to power. The party, therefore, adheres to the principle of trusteeship adumbrated by Gandhiji.

4. The Party holds that the policies of government should be founded on faith in the people and not on state compulsion and the encouragement of hatred and conflict between class and class, expropriation, repudiation

of obligations and the conferment of more and more powers on the officials of government at the expense of the freedom of the citizens.

5. The party stands for every effort being made to foster and maintain spiritual values and preserve what is good in our culture and tradition, and avoid the dominance of a purely materialist philosophy of life which things only in terms of the standard of life without any reference to its content or quality.

6. The party holds that steps should be taken to remove the pervading sense of uncertainty that has been created by the present policies of the government and its varying forecasts of future plans, leading to the drying up of initiative and enterprise in land, shop and factory alike. The party holds that a sense of stability and incentive for individual effort can be restored only by strict adherence to the fundamental rights and guarantee specified in the Constitution as originally adopted in respect of freedom of property, trade and occupation and just compensation for any property compulsory acquired by the state for public purposes.

7. The party holds that in the policies adopted for national development, priority must be assigned to the basic needs of the people, namely, food, water, housing and clothing.

8. The party believes that every citizen has a fundamental right to educate his children according to his choice and in a free atmosphere untrammelled by official directives and that the state should afford facilities for such education without discrimination.

9. The party holds that the paramount need is for increasing food production and that this is best attainted through the self-employed peasant proprietor who is interested in obtaining the highest yield from his land. The party believes in an intensive program of agricultural improvement by promoting the material and psychological inducements for greater production without disturbing the harmony of rural life. The party holds that there should be no disturbance of ownership, management and cultivation of land, but believes in a more effective programme than is being followed at present in respect of irrigation and the supply of material, implements, credit and marketing facilities. The party believes in the need for giving every kind of help to agriculture but is opposed to cultivation through organizations which reduce price ownership to an empty paper-title and which bring into being a loose kind of multiple ownership which is certain to sap the incentive of the farmer and his family, reduce output, and take us to a collective economy with official management. It is firmly opposed to collectivization and bureaucratic management of the rural economy. The Party takes note of the dissatisfaction amongst the rural population that

adequate attention has not been paid to their needs. It holds that the level of life of the rural people should be improved by removing all such impediments as are likely to stand in the way of their attaining a high standard of life and by taking all steps necessary for the purpose in particular for maintaining a reasonable and steady price for agricultural produce, which is parity with other prices.

10. In industry, the party believes in the incentives for higher production and expansion inherent in competitive enterprise with adequate safeguards for the protection of labour and against unreasonable profits, prices or where competition does not secure the necessary corrective. The party stands for the restriction of state enterprise to heavy industries such as are necessary to supplement private enterprise in that field, such national services as Railways and the starting of new enterprises which are difficult for private initiative. The party is opposed to the state entering the field of trade and disturbing free distribution and introducing controls and official management with all its wastefulness and inefficiency. The party believes that in the field of production, the free choice of the producer and the consumer must be given basic place and importance.

11. The party stands for the preservation of the freedom of the small and self-employed artisans, craftsmen and traders who are in danger of losing their occupational opportunities by reason of the policy of statism. These persons perform a great, widespread and inexpensive function in our society, and their gradual extinction will be a national misfortune and add to our unemployment problem.

12. The party stands for great thrift in public expenditure. It holds that taxation should be kept at such levels as will not interfere with reasonable living standard for the people, both rural and urban, and which while being necessary and sufficient for the carrying on of administration and such social and economic services as are taken up by the state, is yet not so high and exacting or so ubiquitous as to prevent capital formation and private investment.

13. The party is opposed to a programme of development based on crippling taxation, abnormal deficit financing and foreign loans which are beyond the capacity of the country to repay.

14. The party is opposed to all policies that lead to excessive inflation, high prices that reduce the value of savings, endowments and fixed incomes, and which create undue hardships for the present generation in the hope of a distant gain.

15. The party believes that the cost of public administration should be reduced considerably. It stands for integrity and efficiency in the services. It is against the expansion of the bureaucratic machine, with a hierarchy of officials asked to do work which is best done by citizens and private agencies, resulting in unproductive waste of national resources.

16. The party believes that the state will best serve the nation by encouraging and affording facilities for a decentralised distribution of industry and by limiting its own regulatory function to the prevention and punishment of anti-social activities wherever called for.

17. The party stands for the creation of opportunities for full and lasting employment in all sectors of life. It stands for a programme of all-round industrialization with a view to developing national resources and reducing unemployment. It believes in a balanced development of capital goods, industries, organized consumer goods industries and rural industries that afford supplementary employment in small scale processing of the products of agriculture.

18. The party stands for a fair deal for labour, whether in the field, factory or office and for correlating to wages, increased productivity and for workers' right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining. It stands for harmonizing the interests of capital and labour when they get into conflict.

19. The party is opposed to any form of pressure being put on officials to deflect them from the course of fair and just discharge of duties without discrimination. It stands for the rule of law, an independent judiciary, and for the full play of powers of judicial review given to the courts by the Constitution.

20. The party shall in all matters keep before itself the cardinal teaching of Gandhiji, maintaining faith in the people and in the efficacy of truth non-violence.

21. The Swatantra party holds that democracy is best served if every political party allows freedom of opinion to its members on all matters outside the fundamental principles of the party. It, therefore, gives its members full liberty on all questions not falling within the scope of the principles stated above. (H.R. Pasricha, The Swatantra Party: Victory in Defeat, Rajaji Foundation, Chennai, 2002).

The anchor of the Swatantra Party was reliance on God and individual freedom — and the main task ahead of them was to keep the party alive so that it could displace the Government which would put its "octopus fingers all over their

private life," said Rajaji, addressing a public meeting in Madras on August 13. Pointing out that socialism had been accepted by the Congress in its various annual sessions and meetings, Rajaji said they should drop the historic name "Congress" and call itself as Socialist Party. Then the people would understand the difference and say, "Here is the Socialist Party and here is the Swatantra Party; which is better for us?"

Dissent on Socialism

Rajaji, Minoo Masani, N.G. Ranga, B.R. Shenoy, Piloo Mody, Khasa Subba Rau, and A.D. Shroff stood courageously against the socialist orthodoxy of post-independence India. Not only did they challenge the state in their own field of work, whether academia, journalism, or business, they launched India's first truly ideological opposition political party, the Swatantra Party. Shroff formed the Forum of Free Enterprise, India's first free-market think tank. Khasa Subba Rau ran Swarajya and Swatantra when most of the press was reluctant to take on the ruling party. These men dedicated their life to protect the freedom and dignity of the individual.

No politician of stature was willing to oppose Nehru's march towards socialism. Rajaji at the age of 81 took up the challenge and formed the Swatantra Party in 1959. Rajaji coined Permit-License-Quota-Raj, the ubiquitous phrase since used to describe Indian central planning. He understood the unintended consequences of economic restrictions. During 1938-1942, in the wake of the War, severe controls were put on the movement of food grains, and the rice was rationed at about 30 grams per person per day. It was typical for wedding invitations to carry an insertion, "Please bring your ration card with you." These controls were in place in 1952, when Rajaji became the Chief Minister of the Madras State. Without any notice or discussion, he announced at night over the All India Radio that food rationing and restrictions were abolished with immediate effect. Dire predictions of scarcity and starvation were made, but Rajaji stood by his decision.

N.G. Ranga led anti-zamindari struggles and established training schools for activists, but when Nehru proposed a ceiling on land holdings, prohibition on storage of grains, and collectivisation of agriculture as a solution, he became the founding president of the Swatantra Party. They helped to trace the evolution of Indian liberalism as they come from varied background, practiced different professions, and traveled all the way from Marxism, to the mixed economy, to Gandhism, and to liberalism. The celebrated diversity of India is well reflected in the personalities, lives, and the paths taken in search for the truth.

Electoral Performance of Swatantra

Swatantra Party did not fare badly in the first general elections after its formation. It received 6.8% of the total votes and 18 seats in the third Lok Sabha

(1962-67). It emerged as the main opposition in four states - Bihar, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Orissa. It became a significant force in some regions of India and became the single largest opposition party in the mid-1960s in Parliament with 8.7% of the total votes and 44 seats in the Fourth Lok Sabha (1967-71). In 1971, it secured only 8 seats in the Lok Sabha with 3% of the votes. The following tables show the performance of Swatantra Party from 1962 to 1971.

Performance of Swatantra Party, Third Lok Sabha Elections, 1962

State	Seat Contested	Total Seats in States	Seats Won	Votes polled by party	% of votes polled
Andhra Pradesh	28	43	1	1775495	14.91
Bihar	43	53	7	1811170	18.21
Gujarat	14	22	4	1320405	25.00
Himachal Pradesh	2	4	0	31049	12.78
Mysore	7	26	0	501212	7.81
Kerala	1	18	0	9675	0.17
Madhya Pradesh	5	36	0	48864	0.73
Maharashtra	3	44	0	31036	0.28
Orrisa	1	20	0	22743	1.16
Punjab	6	22	0	290584	4.28
Rajasthan	10	22	3	940106	18.10
Madras	16	41	0	1300526	10.47
Uttar Pradesh	33	86	3	903094	5.04
West Bengal	4	36	0	99293	1.02
All India	173	473	18	9085252	7.89

Performance of Swatantra Party, Fourth Lok Sabha Elections, 1967

State	Seat Contested	Total Seats in States	Seats Won	Votes polled	% of votes polled
Andhra Pradesh	19	41	3	1865892	13.75
Assam	1	14	0	28711	0.96
Bihar	25	53	0	465501	3.41
Gujarat	21	24	12	2586300	39.92
Haryana	2	9	0	170951	5.60
Himachal Pradesh	1	6	0	34502	4.44
Mysore	11	27	5	1094458	14.29

Kerala	3	19	0	147005	2.34
Madhya Pradesh	2	37	1	253939	2.74
Maharashtra	4	45	0	137900	1.01
Orissa	17	20	8	1253893	30.87
Punjab	6	13	0	199401	4.65
Rajasthan	14	23	8	1842705	27.04
Madras	8	39	6	1414208	9.16
Uttar Pradesh	38	85	1	1038968	4.77
West Bengal	3	40	0	98590	0.77
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1	1	0	1717	4.67
Chandigarh	1	1	0	10258	20.87
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1	1	0	1948	9.17
All India	178	498	44	12646847	8.67

Performance of Swatantra Party, Fifth Lok Sabha Elections, 1971

State	Seat Contested	Total Seats in States	Seats Won	Votes polled by party	% of votes polled
Andhra Pradesh	9	41	0	597777	4.57
Assam	1	14	0	7033	0.23
Bihar	3	53	0	35332	0.24
Gujarat	4	24	2	334858	5.46
Himachal Pradesh	1	4	0	5767	0.85
Mysore	5	27	0	279610	3.66
Kerala	1	19	0	14716	0.23
Madhya Pradesh	1	37	0	8242	0.09
Orissa	13	20	3	710096	15.91
Rajasthan	8	23	3	1014007	14.64
Tamil Nadu	9	39	0	1479693	9.28
Uttar Pradesh	3	85	0	9578	0.05
Delhi	1	7	0	1279	0.10
All India	59	393	8	4497988	3.07

After Rajaji's death in 1972, the party declined rapidly. It was also associated in the public mind with wealthy industrialists and former maharajas. The Swatantra experiment of liberalism ended in 1974 by merging with Bharatiya Kranti Dal led by Charan Singh an omnibus of left-wing, right-wing, and Hindu nationalist opponents of Congress Party rule.

5. The Legacy of Rajaji

Biography or legacy writing is part and parcel of history. As Carlyle asserted, lives of greatmen are essential to understanding society and its institutions. A didactic form of biography seeks to shape individual character of the reader in the process of defining national character. The conventional portrayal of national heroes and their success is blurred in the obsession with psychological explorations of personality. New trends increasingly feature empirical and scientific data analysis. The new trend in popular biography feeds for celebrity voyeurism which reflects curiosity rather than morality or patriotism.

Let us begin the story of Rajaji once again. Rajaji married Alamelu Mangamma at a very early age. They had five children. His wife died when he was 37 and he took the sole responsibility of taking care of his children. Rajaji's daughter Lakshmi was married to Devdas Gandhi, son of Mahatma Gandhi. Rajmohan Gandhi, the grandson of Rajaji and Gandhiji has written biography on them. Rajaji's son C. R. Narasimhan was elected to the Lok Sabha from Krishnagiri in the 1952 and 1957 elections. He has also written biography of Rajaji.

Literature and Music

Rajaji was an accomplished writer both in his mother tongue Tamil as well as English. He was the founder of the Salem Literary Society and regularly participated in its meetings. In 1916, Rajaji started the Tamil Scientific Terms Society. This society coined new words in Tamil for terms connected to botany, chemistry, physics, astronomy and mathematics. At about the same time, he called for Tamil to be introduced as the medium of instruction in schools. In 1922, he published a book *Siraiyil Tavam* which was a day-to-day diary about his first imprisonment from 21 December 1921 to 20 March 1922.

Ramayana and Mahabharata

In 1951, Rajaji translated *Mahabharata* from Sanskrit to English, followed by *Ramayana* in 1957. Earlier, in 1955, he had translated Kambar's *Ramayana* into English. In 1965, he translated *Thirukkural* into English. He also translated the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishads* into English. He wrote on Socrates and Marcus Aurelius in English. Rajaji often regarded his literary works as the best service he had rendered to the people. In 1958, he established the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

In his *Mahabharata*, he prefaced, '…I repeat my confession that in the evening of my busy life during a great and eventful period of Indian history, the writing of these two books wherein I have retold the *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, is, in my opinion, the best service I have rendered to my people. At any rate, they embody the best joy I have experienced; for in these two books I helped our great sages to speak to our dear men and women again in their own language,

elevating their minds through the sorrows borne by Kunti, Kausalya, Draupadi and Sita…The *Ramayana* is not history or biography. It is a part of Hindu mythology. One cannot understand Hindu dharma unless one knows Rama and Sita, Bharata, Lakshmana, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Hanuman. Mythology cannot be dispensed with. Philosophy alone or rituals alone or mythology alone cannot be sufficient. These are the three stands of all ancient religions. The attitude towards things spiritual which belongs to a particular people cannot be grasped or preserved or conveyed unless we have all these three…Mythology is an integral part of religion. It is as necessary for religion and national culture as the skin and the skeleton that preserve a fruit with its juice and its taste. Form is no less essential than substance. Mythology and holy figures are necessary for any great culture to rest on its stable spiritual foundation and function as a life-giving inspiration and guide. Let us keep ever in our minds the fact that it is the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* that bind our vast numbers together as one people, despite caste, space and language that seemingly divide them…"

He frequently wrote articles for *Kalki* and his own journal *Swarajya*. Richard Casey, the Governor of Bengal, regarded Rajaji as the wisest man in India. The best possible tribute to Rajaji was from Mahatma Gandhi who referred to him as the "keeper of my conscience".

Kurai Onrum Illai

Apart from his literary works, Rajaji also composed a devotional song *Kurai Onrum Illai* devoted to Lord Krishna. This song was set to music and is a regular in most Carnatic concerts. Rajaji composed a benediction hymn which was sung by M. S. Subbulakshmi at the United Nations General Assembly in 1967.

Kurai Onrum Illai is a Tamil devotional song written in praise of the Hindu god Krishna and set in Carnatic music. The song was sung by M. S. Subbulakshmi at the United Nations in 1969. This song is unique due to the fact that it does not assume the tone of devoted prayer as most Hindu devotional songs but one of thankfulness to God. The song comprises 3 stanzas each set in three different ragas'. This composition by Rajaji is one of its kind, in the sense that the author does not request any favour from God but only explains that he has no regrets or dissatisfaction about anything in life. In this song, he regards both Lord Vishnu or Venkateswara of Tirupathi and his incarnation Lord Krishna to be one and the same and uses the names interchangeably.

Rajaji's grandson Gopal Gandhi believes that there were multiple factors that led to the composition. He also suspects the presence of hidden meanings in the song. He believes that the song had been inspired by an incident which took place in the shrine of Tirupathi in 1925, when Rajaji had defended the right of an untouchable to enter the shrine of Tirupathi. Rajaji compares the

untouchable's inability to have a glimpse of his favorite God to his own inability to have a glimpse of the invisible creator.

Rajaji and Gandhiji

As a young lawyer in Salem, Rajaji stumbled upon the works of Henry David Thoreau: his book, Walden, as well as his classic essay on civil disobedience. Then he read of the Indian lawyer who was putting these ideas into practice in South Africa. In 1913 he reprinted, at his own expense, a pamphlet describing Gandhi's jail experiences. After Gandhi's return to India in January 1915, he followed his activities with an increasing fascination. However, he had to wait four years to meet him, their first encounter taking place in Madras in March 1919, in a house owned by the proprietor of The Hindu, S. Kasturiranga Iyengar.

When the two men met, Gandhi was planning a satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act. Rajaji energetically joined in, following the path of non-cooperation with the fervour of a convert. He went to jail and, after he came out, started an ashram of his own there, to promote the Gandhian programme of khadi, Prohibition, Hindu-Muslim harmony, and the abolition of untouchability. Then, when Gandhi announced a fresh round of satyagraha in 1930, he chose Rajaji to be the first to break the salt laws in South India.

As a disciple of Gandhi, Rajaji was mostly loyal, but never subservient. He could speak to him with a clarity and directness beyond the reach of most other followers. When, in 1924, the Mahatma threatened to retire from the Congress, Rajaji told him that this would leave the "national organisation to vacillation and drift"; indeed, it would have "the worst consequences" for the future of the freedom movement. Ten years later, the Mahatma moved to retire again, a decision that even Patel and Rajendra Prasad seem to have acquiesced again. This time Rajaji was even more forceful in his dissent. "Your retirement from the Congress will be a suicidal step," he told Gandhi: "An intense and irrevocable feeling of defeatism will spread over the whole nation, and kill political hope and enterprise ... If you think you can retire from the Congress now and keep it and yourself both or either politically important, I think you will be sorely disappointed."

Rajaji could tell Gandhi that he was being irresponsible, and he could tell him also that he was wrong. In 1942, he went completely against the grain of nationalist opinion in opposing the Quit India movement. Rajaji thought a fresh satyagraha foolish when the situation demanded dialogue and reconciliation with both the British and the Muslims. As he courageously and correctly put it: "There is no reality in the fond expectation that Britain will leave the country in simple response to a Congress slogan". Besides, by asking the British to leave, the Congress was issuing an open invitation to a colonising power more brutal by far, the Japanese.

Rajaji's opposition to the Quit India movement made ordinary Congressmen abuse him. The Mahatma, characteristically, would not allow political disagreement to come in the way of personal friendship. Their ties had been strengthened by the marriage, back in 1933, of Gandhi's son Devadas to Rajaji's daughter Lakshmi. Among the letters in the Rajaji papers is a lovely little note of 1935, written from his ashram in Tiruchengode. "Lakshmi and babies are doing well in this climate. Specially Tara enjoys the open space and dustless, motor-less, grounds available for her tiny wanderings". As the years went by, Rajaji's manifest interest in their grandchildren allowed Gandhi to develop, almost for the first time, a love for little babies who had descended directly from him.

Rajaji could disagree with Gandhi but in some fundamentals he was completely with a man whom he variously addressed in his letters to him as "My dearest Master", "My dear Mahatmaji", and "My dear Bapu". One fundamental was the abolition of untouchability, whose centrality to the struggle Rajaji recognised earlier than any other member of Gandhi's inner circle. A second was Hindu-Muslim harmony, a cause to which he was as steadfastly devoted as the Mahatma himself. A third was the dignity of labour. Spinning, scavenging, cleaning one's shoes — all these came easily to Rajaji, although they were scorned by his fellow Iyengar Brahmins and by the fashionably left-wing nationalists he was also obliged to consort with. Copley said, 'Rajaji was the most brilliant, serious, rational and clever-thinking man India ever produced.'

Rajaji and Nehru

A letter to Rajaji written in 1953 by Anantharaman described Rajaji, Nehru and Patel were, respectively, the head, heart and hands of Gandhiji. For Rajaji was unquestionably the most intelligent of Gandhi's close disciples, Nehru arguably the most humane, and Patel the most disciplined and practical. The pity is that they could never function together except for a very brief while. The relationship between Nehru and Patel has attracted much attention. During the freedom movement, Nehru and Rajaji were comrades rather than companions. They were separated by upbringing. One was an aristocrat educated at Harrow and Cambridge, the other a self-made man from small-town South India. In terms of ideology too there were differences: Nehru was more inclined to militant socialist views, Rajaji more oriented towards accommodation with the adversary. But they were united by a shared ideal — the freedom of India — and a shared devotion to their Master. Notably, it was Rajaji whom Gandhi first designated as his successor, later changing his mind in favour of Nehru. They met at Congress meetings, but did not seem to have been especially intimate. Still, Rajaji had impressed Nehru enough to have him write in his autobiography of how Rajaji's 'brilliant intellect, selfless character, and penetrating powers of analysis have been a tremendous asset to our cause.'

It was from 1946 that the two men began to work more closely together. In the next eight years, while Nehru was Prime Minister in New Delhi, Rajaji was, successively, a minister in the interim government, Governor of Bengal, Governor-General of India, Minister without Portfolio and Home Minister in the Central Government, and Chief Minister of Madras State. In all these jobs he had direct and regular dealings with Nehru. But official business drew them closer at the personal level too.

After a visit to the North-East, Nehru wrote to Rajaji about the "most lovely handloom weaving" he had seen there. He confessed to being "astonished at the artistry of these so-called tribal people. I think it will be disastrous from many points of view to allow such an industry to fade away". "Altogether my visit to these North-Eastern areas has been most exhilarating," wrote Nehru to Rajaji: "I wish they were better known by our people elsewhere in India. We could profit much by that contact."

In 1950, Nehru hoped desperately to be able to make Rajaji the first President of the Republic, but the Congress Old Guard thwarted him. After Vallabhbhai Patel's death in December 1950, Rajaji was asked to take over the crucial job of Home Minister. Not long afterwards, he left the Cabinet and returned to Madras. The ostensible reason was tired-ness, but he seems also to have felt that he was not being consulted enough. Anyway, his leaving Delhi was a tragedy, for Jawaharlal Nehru as well as for India. In October 1951, after Rajaji had left Nehru's Cabinet, the Prime Minister sounded him out on the job of Indian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and, when he refused, asked Lord Mountbatten to try and persuade him. Mountbatten duly wrote to Rajaji, and in exchange got a blistering reply, “My career is truly remarkable in its zigzag...Cabinet Minister, Governor without power, Governor General when the Constitution was to be wound up, Minister without Portfolio, Home Minister and... now the proposition is Acting High Commissioner in the U.K.! Finally I must one day cheerfully accept a senior clerk's place somewhere and raise that job to its proper and honoured importance.”

The job Rajaji did accept a few months later was that of Chief Minister of Madras. In 1951, when Rajaji expressed his inability to attend a Congress session at Indore, Nehru, hungry for his company, pleaded with him to come. For his part, Rajaji wrote to influential English politicians to lobby to award Nehru the Nobel Peace Prize, for having "been able to help the cause of peace almost in a miraculous way without power and almost alone". In a speech in Madras, Rajaji again commended Nehru's work for peace in Korea and Indochina, without which "the world would have been entangled in a terrible disaster". In 1954, when Nehru extravagantly praised Rajaji in a speech in Chidambaram, the older man thanked him for his "affectionate and most gracious" words, assuring him: "You may ever be sure of a father's love from me and what a son you are!"

Rajaji remained as Chief Minister until April 1954, when his party indicated that they wanted K. Kamaraj to replace him. He was moved to comment from time to time on the nuclear arms race between Russia and America, with regard to which he took a line not dissimilar to that of Nehru. Then, when the Second Five Year Plan committed the Government of India to a socialist model of economics, he began commenting on domestic affairs as well. Here, however, he came to be increasingly at odds with Nehru.

An article published by Rajaji in May 1958 under the title "Wanted: Independent Thinking" examined the "present discontent about the Congress. He worried that "as a result of tacit submission on the part of the people of emancipated India, a few good persons at the top, enjoying prestige and power, are acting like guardians of docile children rather than as leaders in a parliamentary democracy". "The long reign of popular favourites, without any significant opposition is probably the main cause for the collapse of independent thinking in India. But a healthy democracy required "an Opposition that thinks differently and does not just want more of the same, a group of vigorously thinking citizens which aims at the general welfare, and not one that in order to get more votes from the so-called have-nots, offers more to them than the party in power has given, an Opposition that appeals to reason. Such an Opposition, even if it did not succeed in ousting the ruling party, might yet control and humanise it.

A year later, and touching 80, Rajaji chose a public meeting in Bangalore to launch an all-out attack on the Prime Minister. This was followed by the formation in Madras of the Swatantra Party. This party focused its criticisms on the personality cult around the Prime Minister, and on the economic policies of the ruling Congress. In a series of articles published in his journal Swarajya, Rajaji took apart these socialist pretensions. The Prime Minister's personal allergy towards private enterprise, he commented, was both unwarranted and unfair. For "it is as patriotic to start and manage a good private business concern, be it in industry or in transport or in distribution, as to be attached to a public managed industry either as an official or propagandist patro-saint". But Nehru was moved instead by an admiration for Soviet Russia that was "taking different and various forms at national cost".

Speaking more generally, "the role of the Government should be that of a catalyst in stimulating economic development while individual initiative and enterprise are given fullest play". Vijayalakshmi Pandit wrote to Rajaji in June 1964: "It seemed such a bad thing that two men like yourself and Bhai who had contributed so much individually and jointly to our beloved India should be apart at a time of national crisis. But the moment passed and now it is too late."

Rajaji and Gayatri Devi

Rajaji played a significant role in the political initiation of Gayatri Devi, former Queen of the erstwhile Jaipur State, who joined the Swatantra Party led by him in 1960 and won three successive Lok Sabha elections on the party ticket. Gayatri Devi was among the first royals in the country to join active politics and fight elections. The third wife of former ruler of Jaipur Man Singh II, she was in Tihar jail during the Emergency.

In her autobiography, *A Princess Remembers: The Memoirs of the Maharani of Jaipur*, she candidly provides the background of her decision to join politics 13 years after Independence, when the ruling Congress failed to respect the agreement that made her husband the Rajpramukh of Rajasthan and began isolating him in the public life after the abolition of his title. The Swatantra Party attracted both Gayatri Devi and Man Singh II, as they were impressed by a political group that was speaking up against the excessive State control and the disastrous results of the Congress Party's economic policies.

Soon after joining Swatantra Party, Gayatri Devi wrote to Rajaji informing him of her decision and received a reply thanking her for her braveness. She wrote, "This rather puzzled me at first, for I saw nothing brave in joining an opposition political party… But soon I began to understand." Gayatri Devi first met Rajaji when he was the Governor-General and had come to Jaipur on an official visit in 1949. "He was an exceedingly erect old man, dressed in an impeccably white, crisply starched, handspun cotton dhoti and shirt of his native Madras in south India. Like a true Tami Brahmin he was a strict vegetarian, never drank alcohol or smoked…," says the autobiography.

After Gayatri Devi formally joined Swatantra Party, the State unit invited Rajaji to come to Jaipur and she was expected to speak at a public meeting which he was going to address. Her duty was to introduce Rajaji and the four lines she had to speak were written for her. Yet, it was quite a revolution in the history of Jaipur for an erstwhile Maharani to speak on a public platform.

Gauatri Devi writes, "Once my own small part in the performance was over, I enjoyed my first political meeting. [When] Rajaji started talking, I forgot my worries and was enthralled by the clarity and logic and sense of his speech. I had never before heard anyone criticise the Government openly."

Soon afterwards, Rajaji wrote an article in the party newspaper, which he edited, comparing Gayatri Devi with the Rani of Jhansi. The former Queen found the comparison rather far-fetched. The Rani of Jhansi had led her troops to battle against the British in the cause of freedom. It was only later that Gayatri Devi discovered that to belong to an opposition party was not without its risks. At a time when women belonging to Rajput families were required to remain in 'purdah', she abandoned the veil and plunged into the rough and tumble of politics, winning the Lok Sabha elections by a record margin in 1962 and subsequently in 1967 and 1971 as well. Rajaji died in 1972 during Gayatri

Devi's third term as MP and the Swatantra Party which he had founded split up. Most of its members were absorbed in a new political party. She remembers, "I sat with them but I remained an independent MP."

Nation's conscience

Rajaji was not only a freedom fighter; his long battle against the evils of drink, untouchability, corruption, and even the deployment of nuclear weapons, marks him as one of the best statesmen who ever lived. Jawaharlal Nehru said at a civic reception given to the retiring Home Minister on October 26, 1951 in New Delhi, that he hoped India would continue to benefit from C. Rajagopalachari's razor-sharp intellect, long experience and political maturity.

Indira Gandhi once said: 'There were certain points of mutual attraction between Rajaji and my father. Their minds were not confined to the immediate. They were internationalists while being intensely nationalist. Both had deep concern with the ethics of action and both had an extraordinarily wide range of interests. They were at home in literature and philosophy and in political theory. There were of course also many points of dissimilarity between them.'

Rajaji and Gandhiji wanted people of all walks of life to practise the theory of trusteeship in their day-to-day life. ``Human face to economic reforms'' is the current jargon to temper the liberal economic policies that are sought to be practised even in communist China these days. Rajaji and Mahatma Gandhi gave it a different name — the Doctrine of Trusteeship in tune with India's ancient culture and ethos. ``Hold everything in trust for the welfare of your fellow being — intellect, talent, industry and everything that contributes to the progress of mankind.'' It is indeed a pity that in their preoccupation with petty politics of the day, journalists and statesmen the world over have not given this Doctrine of Trusteeship the attention it deserves in the interests of abiding peace between the "haves" and "have-nots" everywhere as it will go a long way in reducing glaring economic disparities while at the same time, promoting intelligent entrepreneurship informed by sensitive social conscience, so vital for the continued progress of civilisation.

Rajaji fought against the deployment of nuclear weapons also, long before other world statesmen even knew the magnitude of the problem. It was almost a one-man battle from the City of Madras which compelled listening of such powerful world statesmen as Nikita Khruschev of the Soviet Union and President J. F. Kennedy of the United States to his voice of wisdom.

Rajaji in his inaugural address to the National Physical Laboratory in New Delhi on January 21, 1950 said, "Science will not be a slave in chains. True to the feminine type, the goddess of Science rejects the direct mercenary approach and prefers to be gracious by her own choice and only when you approach her for her own sake. ... Of course I am not unaware that sometimes these discoveries

of fundamental scientists are seized on by Satan for the infliction of mere miseries on mankind than he is now subjected to, and in this respect the atom has been a great offender. On the one hand, poor Einstein is working on the Expanding Universe and giving us equations which are hieroglyphics to rue, but must be a wonderful joy to mathematicians. Einstein's expanding universe can do us no great immediate damage. There is no harm in these equations. On the other hand, however, those eminent scientists who worship at the altar of the infinitesimal, have brought the world precipitously near destruction. The offender is not really the Atom. It is the business of statesmen to agree to prevent the misuse of Truth…The search for truth must go on and India should put in her share of work in Science and take her share of fame in return. If the scientists of India make up their minds, they can raise India's prestige to a degree which will move than make up for any failures or defects in other fields…Men of Science, on account of their knowledge of some secrets of Nature, contemplate with increased humility and reverence that which must ever remain outside the pale of human analysis."
Richard Nixon, then Vice President of the United States, came to India in 1954, Rajaji told Nixon that it was "wrong to seek the secret of the creation of matter. It isn't needed for civilian purposes. It is an evil and will destroy those who [try]'. He was invited to the White House by President Kennedy; perhaps the only civilian, not in power, ever to be accorded formal state reception. The two discussed various matters and it is said that the great Indian statesman tried to impress on the young President the folly of an arms race - even one which the US could win. At the end of the meeting President Kennedy remarked "This meeting had the most civilizing influence on me. Seldom have I heard a case presented with such precision, clarity and elegance of language."

E. M. S. Namboodiripad, a prominent Communist Party leader, once remarked that "Rajaji was the Congress leader he respected the most despite the fact he was also someone with whom he differed the most. Periyar, one of Rajaji's foremost political rivals remarked that Rajaji was "a leader unique and unequalled, who lived and worked for high ideals."

On his death, condolences poured in from all corners of the country. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India remarked, "Mr. Rajagopalachari was one of the makers of new India, a sincere patriot, a man whose penetrating intellect and moral sense added depth to national affairs. His analysis, his anticipation, his administrative acumen and his courage to steer an unpopular course if he felt the need, marked him as a statesman and made an impact on the national history at several crucial junctures. He had held the highest positions and lent distinction to every office."

Rajaji was regarded as a pioneer of social reform. He issued temple entry proclamations in the Madras Presidency and worked towards the upliftment of Dalits. He played a pivotal role in the conclusion of the Poona Pact between B. R. Ambedkar and the Indian National Congress and spearheaded the Mahabal

Temple Entry in 1938. He was a staunch advocate of prohibition and was elected Secretary of the Prohibition League of India in 1930. When elected as Premier of Madras Presidency, he introduced prohibition all over the province. Rajaji was also an active member of the All India Spinners Association.

Rajaji and Liberalisation

The mastermind, the prime mover and the progenitor of the liberalisation weltanschauung was the inimitable Rajaji. Like Gandhiji, who had a perspective on economic welfare focussed on village republics and local self-reliance, on the one hand, and on creation of wealth by individuals accepting the principle of trusteeship, Rajaji had a distinctive economic philosophy of competitive private enterprise guided by an enlightened social conscience. His developmental perspective was such that he regarded any attempt by the State (the political establishment) to curb, appropriate or control private enterprise, whether in agriculture, trade or industry, as an unproductive encroachment on freedom and as the breeding-ground of corruption and flagrant misuse of public resources.

Rajaji's most active and fertile period of dharmic opposition to the dogged pursuit of a planned, controlled economy, was during the last phase of Jawaharlal Nehru's rule (1959-64), when a whole concatenation of adverse consequences of what he called ``the control-licence-permit raj'' came to the surface. A vast pyramid of public sector enterprises involving massive investments of funds by the Central Government without the prospect of even nominal returns by way of profits, especially on long-gestation projects in the infrastructure, had come to be recognised as the principal feature of economic policy.

Rajaji called this ‘gigantism’, and ‘megalomania.’ Government had come to defend chronically on deficit financing, that is, spending much more than what its revenue resources and public borrowing would permit. Rajaji was one of the earliest thinkers in India who were profoundly influenced by the writings of Prof. F. A. Hayek *The Road to Serfdom*'. Rajaji distilled Prof. Hayek's critique of planning in a cryptic statement: ``The Socialist philosophy of controlled economy is based on the two false assumptions of the omniscience of Government and the stupidity of the people.'' In advocating competitive private enterprise based on ``responsible individualism'' or the extended concept of corporate social responsibility, Rajaji was clearly distancing himself away from the law of the jungle or the phenomenon of unethical competition.

He did not consider the controlled economy as the barrier for monopoly. ``It is not good certainly to let men with money become powerful. But as Hayek has written, it would be worse if only men politically powerful can make money. ..... The oxygen of competition has been displaced by the foul air of monopolies.....'' It was not surprising that Rajaji considered the controlled

economy as a bane for its wasteful centralisation of the national economy in the hands of the ministers and the bureaucrats.

A Life in Search

The story of life and political career of Rajaji has been well written by Monica Felton, Copley, Erdman, Bakshi, Rajmohan Gandhi, Kousigan, Kesavan, and R.K. Murthi. Vasanthi Srinivasan, in her *Gandhi's Conscience Keeper: Rajagopalachari and Indian Politics*, asks, 'How does a leader who refused to face elections and had to be hurriedly nominated to the council before he could be sworn in as Chief Minister reconcile with his ideas on democracy?' Vasanthi explains this contradiction through Rajaji's subsequent actions and political positions.

She is critical on his views on contraception, population control and on gendered division of labour. She says that he is "in the thrall of sexual convention and prejudice. He failed to get the balance right between liberty and virtue in this context." She defends Rajaji's school reform of 1953, which encouraged kids to "learn familial crafts and trades".

M.S.S.Pandian has argued in his recent book *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin* (2007) that Rajaji's later day support for anti-Hindi agitation stemmed from his concern for the anglophile Tamil Brahmin.

Historians can perceive two images of Rajaji: one is the all-India image, Gandhiji's lieutenant in the South, first Governor General of free India and later the leader of Swatantra party. The second is that of the premier of Madras presidency in the 1930s and later as Chief Minister in the 1950s.

She writes, "He was vilified as a wily South Indian Brahmin but he was in essence a theocentric liberal. There is much to be learnt from his political vision and practice: for there is more within his theocentric liberalism than is dreamt of in Indian Political life today."

Gandhi called Rajaji his conscience-keeper only once. That was in May 1933. In September 1932, Mahatma Gandhi went on a fast for seven days, which resulted in the Poona Pact. The fast was meant to urge caste Hindus to give up untouchability so that B.R. Ambedkar could be persuaded to give up his demand for separate electorates for Dalits. In May 1933, Gandhi undertook a 21-day fast as he was shocked by the increasing evidence of insincerity or moral lapses on the part of workers engaged in "Harijan" service. Attributing their weakness to imperfection in himself, Gandhi undertook the fast to make himself, through prayerful communion with God, a worthier instrument of service. The announcement of the fast led to appeals from his admirers and well-wishers to abandon the idea. The British authorities released him from prison fearing he may die while in custody. It was on the eve of this fast that

Gandhi referred to Rajaji as the keeper of his conscience. Rajaji had sent him a long telegram attacking the very basis of his fast. During this talk, Rajaji made a number of reasoned arguments to persuade Gandhi to give up his fast, which he called unscientific. But Gandhi was adamant and fielded every objection advanced by Rajaji.

It requires some effort to understand why Gandhi might have considered Rajaji his conscience-keeper, especially when the latter considered Gandhi his master or mentor. Vasanthi Srinivasan mentions that Gandhi conceived of the first nationwide satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act after he visited Rajaji in Madras in 1919. A dream he had when he stayed at Rajaji's house led to the conception of the satyagraha. This is a sheer coincidence and not a result of any dialogue with Rajaji.

In 1927, Gandhi said in Karaikudi that Rajaji was his "only possible successor". He was to revise this view later in favour of Jawaharlal Nehru. Rajmohan Gandhi, a biographer of both Gandhi and Rajaji, mentions that Rajaji's lack of proficiency in Hindi, the marriage in 1933 between Rajaji's daughter Lakshmi and Gandhi's youngest son, Devdas Gandhi, and the growing differences between Rajaji and himself were the reasons for Gandhi's decision to avoid naming Rajaji. Gandhi probably did not wish to invite the charge of nepotism.

She refuses to accept the label of a conservative to describe Rajaji and instead calls him a theocentric liberal. She laments that Rajaji's political contributions have been pretty much treated like chutney on a leaf, to be tasted or left alone by scholars of Indian political thought.

Despite the fact that Rajaji was considered to be one of the most able statesmen in the national arena, his provincial and then, state administrations are believed to have fared badly. Critics opine that he completely failed to gauge the thoughts and feelings of the masses. His introduction of Hindi and the Hereditary Education Policy were the target of extensive criticism. His anti-reactionary stance during the Quit Indian Movement and his 'C.R. Formula' angered most of his colleagues in the Indian National Congress.

Although Rajaji's popularity at the regional level fluctuated greatly, it is believed that he was able to exercise his stranglehold over provincial politics mainly because he was favored by leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Critics feel that when the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee K. Kamaraj and a majority of the provincial leaders turned against him in the 1940s, Rajaji clung on to a position of influence in regional politics through support from his colleagues at the Centre.

Rajaji has always been the archetype of the Tamil Brahmin nemesis of the Dravidian movement. Deeply religious and a pious Hindu and follower of the Vedas and Upanishads, he was accused of being pro-Sanskrit and pro-Hindi, a

stigma which Rajaji found difficult to erase despite his vehement protests against the imposition of Hindi during the Madras Anti-Hindi agitations of 1965. He was also accused of attempting to heavily Sanskritize Tamil vocabulary through the inclusion of a large number of Sanskrit words in his writings. His Hereditary Education Policy was seen as an attempt to reinforce Varnashrama dharma. His Indian nationalist and anti-secessionist leanings formed the inspiration for Periyar's coining of the term 'Brahmin-Bania combine.'

In one way or other, Periyar's Dravidian Movement can be considered as one of the legacies of Rajaji. In the absence of Hindi enforcement, new scheme of primary education, and Sanskritization of Tamil tradition – which remain the legacies of Rajaji – Periyar's Dravidian Movement could not have enough impetus. People won't listen to simple slogans like 'God does not exist' or 'the Dravidian race does not have Gods.' Rajaji was the latent master of Dravidian Movement. Ironically, his opposition to Congress and his later day's anti-Hindi stand in support of Tamil are less noticed by the Dravidian offsprings.

6. Life of Periyar

The story of Periyar is somewhat different from mainstream constructed biographies of greatmen of Tamil Nadu. No myth-making portrayal is available with the birth of E.V. Ramasamy. Erode Venkata Ramasami Naicker on September 17, 1879, in Erode, Tamil Nadu. The name Naicker denoted the caste he was born into. Periyar's father, a rich businessman, was Venkata Naicker, and his mother was Chinna Thayammal. He had one elder brother named Krishnaswamy and two sisters named Kannamma and Ponnuthoy. He later came to be known as Periyar, respected one. In 1929, Periyar announced the deletion of his caste title Naicker from his name at the First Provincial Self-Respect Conference of Chenggalpattu.

Periyar attended school for five years after which he joined his father's trade at the age of 12. He used to listen to Tamil Vaishnavite gurus who gave discourses in his house enjoying his father's hospitality. At a young age, he began questioning the apparent contradictions in the Hindu mythological stories which he opined to be lies spread by the Indo-Aryan race. As Periyar grew, he felt that people used religion only as a mask to deceive innocent people and therefore took it as one of his duties in life to warn people against superstitions and priests.

Periyar's father arranged for his wedding when he was nineteen. The bride, Nagammai was only thirteen. It was not, altogether, an arranged marriage because Periyar and Nagammai had known each other and were already in love with each other. Nagammai actively supported her husband in his later public activities and agitations. Two years after their marriage, a girl child was born to them. However, this child lived only for five months. The couple had no more children.

In 1904, Periyar went on a pilgrimage to Kasi to worship in the revered Siva temple of Kashi Vishwanath. Though regarded as one of the holiest sites of Hinduism, he witnessed immoral activities, begging, and floating dead bodies. His frustrations extended to functional Hinduism in general when he experience what he called Brahmanic exploitation.

However, one particular incident in Kasi had a profound impact on Periyar's ideology and future work. At worship site there were free meals offered to guests. To Periyar's shock, he was refused meals at choultries which exclusively fed Brahmins. Due to extreme hunger, Periyar felt compelled to enter one of the choultries disguised as a Brahmin with a sacred thread on his bare chest, but was betrayed by his moustache. The gatekeeper at the temple concluded that Periyar was not a Brahmin as Brahmins were not permitted by the Hindu shastras to have moustaches. He not only prevented Periyar's entry but also pushed him rudely to the street.

As his hunger became intolerable, Periyar was forced to feed on leftovers from the streets. Around this time, he realized that the choultry which had refused him entry was built by a wealthy non-Brahmin from South India. This discriminatory attitude dealt a blow to Periyar's regard for Hinduism, for the events he had witnessed at Kasi were completely different from the picture of Kasi he had in mind, as a holy place which welcomed all. Ramasami was a theist till his visit to Kasi, after which his views changed and he became an atheist.

Persuaded by C.Rajagopalachari and P.Varadarajulu Naidu, leading Congressmen of the day Periyar resigned from the Chairmanship of Erode Municipality and from many other honorary posts to plunge himself into active nationalist politics. His brief tie-up with Annie Besant's Home Rule movement ended up in disillusionment. In his short autobiographical notes Periyar mentions that he visited Amrister after the Jalianwallabagh massacre and that what he saw and heard there made him an ardent Nationalist. He was soon to be elected President of Tamil Nadu Congress Comiitee. From 1920 onwards he was consistently urging the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee to demand for proportional representation of non Brahmins and depressed castes in government services.

Periyar joined the Indian National Congress in 1919 after quitting his business and resigning from public posts. He held the chairmanship of Erode Municipality and wholeheartedly undertook constructive programs spreading the use of Khadi, picketing toddy shops, boycotting shops selling foreign cloth, and eradicating untouchability. In 1921, Periyar courted imprisonment for picketing toddy shops in Erode. When his wife as well as his sister joined the agitation, it gained momentum, and the administration was forced to come to a compromise. He was again arrested during the Non-Cooperation movement and the Temperance movement. In 1922, Periyar was elected the President of the Madras Presidency Congress Committee during the Tirupur session where he advocated strongly for reservation in government jobs and education. His attempts were defeated in the Congress party due to a strong presence of discrimination and indifference.

In Vaikom, a small town in Kerala state, then Travancore, there were strict laws of untouchability in and around the temple area. Dalits, also known as Harijans were not allowed into the close streets around and leading to the temple, let alone inside it. Anti-caste feelings were growing and in 1924 Vaikom was chosen as a suitable place for an organized Satyagraha, passive resistance campaign as practiced by Gandhi. Under his guidance a movement had already begun with the aim of giving all castes the right to enter the temples. Thus, agitations and demonstrations took place. On April 14, Periyar and his wife Nagamma arrived in Vaikom. They were met with arrest and imprisoned for participation. In spite of Gandhi's objection to non-Keralites and non-Hindus

taking part, Periyar and his followers continued to give support to the movement till it was withdrawn. He received the title Vaikkom Veeran, mostly given by his Tamil followers who participated in the Satyagraha. However, a considerable section of intellectuals feel that Periyar's participation in the Indian independence movement and his contribution in the Vaikom Satyagraha have been highly exaggerated.

The way in which the Vaikom Satyagraha events have been recorded provides a clue to the image of the respective oraganizers. In an article entitle Gandhi and Ambedkar, A Study in Leadership, Eleanor Zelliot relates the 'Vaikom Satyagraha' including Gandhi's negotiations with the temple authorities in relation to the event. Furthermore, the editor of Periyar's Thoughts states that Brahmins purposely suppressed news about Periyar's participation. A leading Congress magazine Young India in its extensive reports on Vaikom never mentions Periyar.

Periyar and his followers campaigned constantly to influence and pressurize the government to take measures for removing social inequality even while other nationalist forerunners focused on the struggle for political independence. The Self-Respect Movement was described from the beginning, as "dedicated to the goal of giving non-Brahmins a sense of pride based on their Dravidian past". In 1952, the Periyar Self-Respect Movement Institution was registered with a list of objectives of the institution from which may be quoted as for the diffusion of useful knowledge of political education; to allow people to live a life of freedom from slavery to anything against reason and self respect; to do away with needless customs, meaningless ceremonies, and blind superstitious beliefs in society; to put an end to the present social system in which caste, religion, community and traditional occupations based on the accident of birth, have chained the mass of the people and created "superior" and "inferior" classes... and to give people equal rights; to completely eradicate untouchability and to establish a united society based on brother/sisterhood; to give equal rights to women; to prevent child marriages and marriages based on law favorable to one sect, to conduct and encourage love marriages, widow marriages, inter caste and inter-religious marriages and to have the marriages registered under the Civil Law; and to establish and maintain homes for orphans and widows and to run educational institutions.

Propagation of the philosophy of self respect became the full-time activity of Periyar since 1925. A Tamil weekly Kudi Arasu started in 1925, while the English journal Revolt started in 1928 carried on the propaganda among the English educated people. The Self-Respect Movement began to grow fast and received the sympathy of the heads of the Justice Party from the beginning. In May 1929, a conference of Self-Respect Volunteers was held at Pattukkotai under the presidency of S. Guruswami. K.V. Alagiriswami took charge as the head of the volunteer band. Conferences followed in succession throughout the Tamil districts of the former Madras Presidency. A training school in Self-

Respect was opened at Erode, the home town of Periyar. The object was not just to introduce social reform but to bring about a social revolution to foster a new spirit and build a new society.

The Self-Respect Movement came under the influence of the leftist philosophies and institutions. Periyar after establishing the Self-Respect Movement as an independent institution began to look for strengthening it politically and socially. And for this, he undertook a study of the history and politics of different countries combined with personal observation of the systems at work.

Final break with Gandhi came when Periyar and other Self-Respecters failed to persuade Gandhi to give up his belief in Varnashrama Dharma. Periyar welcomed the Simon Commission as he believed that its recommendations would pave the way for the rightful representation of non Brahmin and Untouchable castes in running the affairs of the government. While his Self-Respect ideas were making a powerful appeal to the downtrodden masses crystallizing in horizontal solidarity of the backward and depressed castes throwing a powerful challenge to the status quo, he began actively supporting the Independent Ministry headed by P.Subbaroyan (after the Justice Party failed to get a majority in the Madras Legislative Assembly in 1927 elections) for its daring implementation of the Government Orders passed by the Justice ministry to give proportional representation in the Government jobs for non Brahmins and depressed castes and for its radical measures to uplift women and depressed castes. For the first time in the history of Tamil Nadu two members of 'untouchable' community were appointed as members of Devoswam (Temple Affairs) Committee.

Periyar supported the bill moved in the Legislative Assembly by social reformer and the Congress member Muthulakshmi Reddy to do doing away with the Devadasi system in the Temples. Copies of Manu Smriti were burnt in many Self respect meetings. Periyar removed from his name once and for all the caste appellation 'Naicker'.
In the month of May 1928 Periyar was arrested at Erode for his participation in the strike of the employees and workers of South Indian Railway. He was earlier arrested at Tiruchirapalli at the beginning of the year for his alleged provocative remarks against the upper caste Christians.

Periyar launched his English weekly 'Revolt' on 7th November 1928. In the first anniversary number he wrote:" It was on the 7th day November 1928 that memorable day in the history of the nations, the day of the anniversary of the immortal Revolution in Russia, the day which is looked upon as the violent explosion of human liberty, the day which is memorialised by millions in Russia for the mighty mixing up of monarchs and the massed, - it was on that day that the revolt saw the light of day at Erode. Even as we pointed out at the outset, we 'unfurled the flag of revolt to destroy tyrannies and to befriend men and women'. Our aim, as we declared, was to put before our people, and

humanity in general, how 'social injustice is at the root of our economic bondage and political subjugation".

'Revolt' gave extensive coverage to the anti-caste and social reform movements taking place in various parts of British India as well as in princely states. These included reports on Adi Dravida Conference in Karaikudi, Non Brahmin Youth Conference held at Madurai, All Travancore Social Conference in Nagercoil, Anti-Caste Conference organized by Dr.B.R.Ambedkar in Nasik, Lohore conference of Jat Pat Todak Mandal. It gave great importance to the struggle waged by Samaj Samata Sangh led by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar for the rights of the Untouchables to enter the Temple in Ganesh temple in Dadar, Bombay.

Periyar and his movement put their focus on the rights and emancipation of untouchable castes and endeared themselves to the depressed caste organizations of the day. In the Karaikudi Conference of Adi Dravida Association led by M.C.Raja, a resolution was passed urging its members to buy and read Justice Party daily 'Dravidan' and Self respect weekly 'Kudi Arasu'

Periyar welcomed into the fold of Self-Respect Movement M.Singaravelu, an outstanding intellectual (born in a poor fisherfolk family) and a radical Congressman with Buddhist scholarship turned Communist (' the first Communist of South India').Singaravelu began enriching the movement through his essays on socialism, religion, superstition and rationalism. K.V.Alagarisamy, a Self-Respect veteran was instrumental in bringing this great man of letters to the movement after both of them jointly addressed a meeting in Napier Park in Madras to condemn the death sentence awarded to Sacco and Vanzetti, the American anarchist labour leaders after a fake trial.

Periyar toured Malaysia for a month from December 1929 to January 1930 to propagate the self-respect philosophy. Embarking on his journey from Nagapattinam with his wife Nagammal and his followers, Periyar was received by 50,000 Tamil Malaysians in Penang. During the same month, he inaugurated the Tamils Conference convened by the Tamils Reformatory Sangam in Ipoh and then went to Singapore. In December 1931 he undertook a tour of Europe, accompanied by S. Ramanathan and Erode Ramu, to personally acquaint himself with their political systems, social movements, way of life, economic and social progress and administration of public bodies. He visited Egypt, Greece, Turkey, Russia, Germany, England, Spain, France and Portugal, staying in Russia for three months. On his return journey he halted at Ceylon and returned to India in November 1932.

The tour shaped the political ideology of Periyar to achieve the social concept of Self-Respect. The communist system obtained in Russia appealed to him as appropriately suited to deal with the social ills of the country. Thus, on socio-economic issues Periyar was Marxist, but he did not advocate for abolishing private ownership. Immediately after his return, Periyar in alliance with the

enthusiastic communist M. Singaravelu Chettiar, began to work out a socio-political scheme incorporating socialist and self-respect ideals. This marks a crucial stage of development in the Self-Respect Movement which got politicized and found its compatibility in Tamil Nadu.

While the Congress Party was registering bigger and bigger victories in civic polls of 1936, the fortunes of the faction ridden Justice Party started sliding down. Periyar's programme was accepted by the Party only by the end of 1936 and in response to the Congress critics who claimed that it was only a pale imitation of their Karachi resolutions, Periyar challenged them to show whether there was anything in the Congress programme similar to the ones he had included in his own for the removal of discrimination based on castes, upliftment of women and for proportional representation. Unruffled by the series of defeats faced by the Justice Party he and his self- respect colleagues went ahead with concentrating their energies on social issues.

Periyar serialised the Tamil translation of B.R.Ambedkar ' Annihilation of Castes' in 'Kudi Arasu' from its issue dated 24.7.1936 and each installment was accompanied by a photograph of Ambedkar. It was published in a book form in 1937.

The 'communist' self-respecters who made a final break with Periyar launched a short-lived 'Suyamariyadhai Samadharma Party' only to merge it with the Congress Socialist Party with the intention of serving the 'mighty anti-imperialist force' that was Congress!

Periyar took over the responsibility of bringing out the Justice Party's Tamil daily Viduthalai. He infused the columns of the daily with anti-caste, self-respect ideas. In the first general elections held for the Madras Legislative Council under the Government of India Act, the Congress won an impressive majority trouncing the Justice Party. When the Congress wavered for some time on the question of forming a ministry in 1937, a non-Brahmin ministry was formed with the help of the Justice Party members and the Adi Dravida leader M.C.Raja. But Periyar was keen to see the formation of a Congress ministry as he was convinced that all its weaknesses, its will to power at any cost and its class-caste character would unfold themselves through its acts of commissions and omissions.

The Congress ministry headed by Rajaji, in the name of slashing the government expenditure in view of the fall in the government revenue resulting from the partial prohibition implemented in the state closed down hundreds of primary school depriving the children of backward and untouchable castes of basic education. The ministry also tried to implement Gandhi's Wardha Scheme in the educational institutions, thus clandestinely introducing the varna system. It put down with iron hand the struggles of the workers and arrested the leading members of the Congress Socialist Party. To cap its reactionary

measures, the ministry introduced the scheme of compulsory learning of Hindi in selected schools to be extended to all other schools in future. C.Rajagoplachari argued that by learning Hindi one can read Thulasidas's Ramayana in original. Sensing that the scheme of compulsory learning of Hindi was a clever ploy to build Sanskritic-Brahminical ideological hegemony, Periyar and the self-respecters and Justice Party members decided to wage a relentless battle against the scheme. Almost every segment of the Tamil populace including a section of the Congressmen joined the anti-Hindi agitation launched by Periyar. Several hundreds of agitators were arrested under various sections of the IPC including 124A. Two of them, one a Dalit and another from a most backward community died on account of ill treatment in the prisons. In the Tamil Nadu Women's Conference held at Chennai on 12 and 13 November 1938, it was unanimously resolved that E.V.Ramasamy would hereafter be addressed only with the honorific 'Periyar' (Great Man) and not by his name. For the anti-Hindi speeches he made in this women's conference and in Pethunaickenpet, Chennai on 13th and 14th November 1938 respectively, Periyar was arrested under section 117 of IPC and Criminal Law Amendment Act Section I and sentenced to two year rigorous imprisonment. It was later commuted to one year simple imprisonment. First lodged in the Central Prison in Chennai, he was later shifted to the jail in Bellary (now part of Karnataka)

The active members of the rudderless, leaderless Justice Party, seeing the immense popularity of Periyar, elected him their Party President on 29.12.1938 in its Provincial Conference held at Madras. As Periyar was in prison, his presidential address was read out by A.T.Panneerselvam, a leading Justicite and a former Minister.

The anti-Hindi agitation joined and supported by various streams and strands of Tamil enthusiasts and anti-Brahmin militants crystallized into a veritable Tamil Nationalist movement with a demand , first for separation of Tamil speaking areas from the erstwhile composite Presidency of Madras and subsequently for a separate country. Periyar endorsed the demand for a separate Tamil Nadu which he later made it a demand for Dravida Nadu roughly approximating the geographical boundaries of the composite Madras Presidency of his time. He wanted it to enjoy the status of a separate dominion state under the British Crown with a view to protect it from the exploitative machinations of what he called the Brahmin- North Indian (Bania) alliance.

In 1937, when Rajaji became the Chief Minister of Madras state, he introduced Hindi as a compulsory language of study in schools, igniting thereby a series of anti-Hindi agitations. Tamil nationalists, the Justice Party under Sir A. D. Panneerselvam, and Periyar organized anti-Hindi protests in 1938 which ended with numerous arrests by the Rajaji government.

During the same year, the slogan "Tamil Nadu for Tamilians" was first raised by Periyar in protest against the introduction of Hindi in schools. He explained

that the introduction of Hindi was a dangerous mechanism used to the infiltration of Aryans on Dravidian culture. He reasoned that the adoption of Hindi would make Tamils subordinate to Hindi-speaking North Indians. Periyar explained that Hindi would not only halt the progress of Tamilians but would completely destroy their culture and nullify the progressive ideas.

A political party known as the South Indian Libertarian Federation was founded in 1916, principally to oppose the economic and political power of the Brahmins. The party was later named the Justice Party, and its stated goal was to render social justice to non-Brahmin groups. In order to gain the support of the masses, non-Brahmin politicians began propagating an ideology of equality among non-Brahmins. Brahmanical priesthood and Sanskritic social class-value hierarchy were blamed for the existence of inequalities among non-Brahmins.

In 1937, when the government required that Hindi be taught in the school system, Periyar organized opposition through the Justice Party to this policy. After 1937, the Dravidian movement derived considerable support from the student community. In later years, opposition to Hindi played a big role in the politics of Tamil Nadu. The fear of the Hindi language had its origin in the conflict between Brahmins and non-Brahmins. To the Tamil, acceptance of Hindi in the school system was a form of bondage. When the Justice Party weakened in the absence of mass support, Periyar took over the leadership of the party after being jailed for opposing Hindi in 1939. Under his tutelage the party prospered, but the party's conservative members, most of whom were rich and educated, withdrew from active participation.

At the provincial Conference of Justice Party held at Salem , he had the name of the Justice Party (South Indian Liberal Federation) changed as 'Dravidar Kazhagam'. One of the resolutions passed in the Conference called upon all the non Brahmins to throw away the titles and honours conferred on them by the British. Periyar also revived the demand for separate electorate for scheduled castes. Another resolution demanding a separate, sovereign Dravida Nadu completely independent of the British Rule was also passed.

Dr B.R.Ambedkar called on Periyar at Chennai and discussed with him the political developments in India. According to the report on the meeting published in 'Kudi Arasu' Ambedkar was understood to have agreed with the contents of the resolutions of the Salem Conference of the Justice Party and supported the Dravida Nadu demand.'Kudi Arasu' also reported that Ambedkar wanted even the Maharashtra part of the country be included in Dravida Nadu. On the same evening Ambedkar met the leaders of a section of the old Justicites who disagreed with Periyar's idea of clubbing social issues with political ones and functioned under the old name. Ambedkar frankly expressed his unhappiness about the elitist nature of the (old) Justice Party which failed to develop any grass root social base and was interested only in hunting for government jobs and positions.

Dr.B.S.Moonje , the leader of Hindu Maha Sabha during his visit to Chennai called on Periyar and discussed with him the political changes that were taking place. According to the reports published in 'Kudi Arasu', Periyar insisted on removing the hegemony of the Brahmins in the social and political life of the country and that Separate Dravida Nadu was the only solution for the non Brahmins.

Periyar visited Calcutta and addressed M.N.Roy's Radical Democratic Party' Conference on December 27, 1944. He also visited Kanpur and addressed Non-Brahmin backward classes Conference.

Self-Respect journals like 'Kudi Arasu' and 'Dravida Nadu' expressed their support to the Indian National Army men taken prisoners by the British and also those participated in the RIN 'mutiny'. Periyar and his journals launched trenchant criticisms of Communists who instead of targeting the 'Brahmin-Bania' Congress were attacking the Justicites and self-respecters. 'Kudi Arasu' described the Hindu Maha Sabha and the Communists as the right and left wing respectively of the Congress. Periyar also launched the English weekly *Justicite*, which was short lived.

He had his own observations on the Contituent Assembly. In a mass meeting of Adi Dravidas Periyar expressed his unhappiness about Ambedkar joining the Constituent Assembly. He opined that in view of the absence of a strong political and social base for Ambedkar, the Aryans were able to appropriate him making him no longer able to thunder against the reactionary Brahmins and call Bhagavat Gita as a blabber of a fool as he did in the Viceroy's Executive Council. When the British Government announced its decision to partition India and grant dominion status to India and Pakistan, Periyar was shocked by the blatant arbitrariness displayed by the Brahmin-Bania-British alliance in deciding on the future of the Indian people. He sent a telegraphic message to the British Primier Atlee requesting him to reconsider the decision and do justice to all sections of the Indian people.

His reaction towards Independence Day was very much severe. Periyar called upon his followers and the general public to observe August 15, 1947 as a day of mourning. The General Secretary of Dravidar Kazhagam, C.N.Annadurai, however wrote that it was a day of rejoicing, thus paving the way for the irreversible split in Periyar's movement. Periyar and the leading Dravidar Kazhagam intellectual S.Gurusamy engaged the Communists in polemics on the nature of Indian Independence.

On the contrary, Periyar called upon the people of Tamil Nadu to observe 1st July as the 'Dravida Nadu Separation Day'. On 14.9.1947 he organized a mammoth Dravida Nadu separation conference at Cuddalore. It was addressed

amongst others Thiru Vi.Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, a celebrated Congress nationalist, trade unionist and a Tamil man of letters.

To protest against the imposition of Hindi Periyar convened the meeting of all-party leaders in Chennai in 1948. He violated the ban order imposed under Section 144 IPC at Kumbakonam to assert the right of freedom expression against the imposition of Hindi. He was arrested along with several hundreds of Dravidar Kazhagam volunteers when they staged a protest against the visit of Rajaji, the Governor General of India.

From 1948 to 1952 he and his leading cadres supported the demand for the civil and political rights of the Communists whose party was banned in 1949. The campaigns led by him and his party men resulted in the commutation of death sentences given to 11 communist workers who participated in Telengana struggle. Leading Communists of the day S.A.Dange, A.K.Goplan and M.Kalyanasundaram placed on records their appreciation of the support rendered by Periyar.

When Gandhi was assassinated by Godse, Periyar was deeply distressed and disturbed. He gave a moving talk in the All India Radio helping to restore peace and order and wrote that since the Independent India owed its being to Gandhi it should be named Gandhinadu.

From 1949 onwards, the Dravidar Kazhagam intensified social reformist work and put forward the fact that the superstitions were the cause for the degeneration of Dravidians. The Dravidar Kazhagam vehemently fought for the abolition of untouchability amongst the Dalits. It also focused its attention on the liberation of women, women's education, willing marriage, widow marriage, orphanages and mercy homes.

The differences between Periyar and Annadurai were inflating during this period. Periyar advocated a separate independent Dravidian or Tamil state, while Annadurai compromised with the Delhi government combined with claims of increased state independence. Periyar was convinced that individuals and movements that undertake the task of eradicating the social evils in the Indian sub-continent have to pursue the goal with devotion and dedication without deviating from the path and with uncompromising zeal. Thus, if they contest elections aiming to assume political power, they would lose vigor and sense of purpose. But amongst his followers, there were those who had a different view. They wanted to enter into politics and have a share in running the government. They were looking for an opportunity to part with Periyar. Thus, when Periyar got married to Maniammai on July 9, 1948, they quit the Dravidar Kazhagam stating that Periyar set a bad example by marrying a young woman in his old age - he was 70 and she 30. In 1949, Annadurai established a separate association called the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. Those who parted company with Periyar also joined the DMK. The DMK

advocated that the Tamil language was much richer than Sanskrit and Hindi. The Dravidar Kazhagam continued to counter Brahminism, Indo-Aryan propaganda, and uphold the Dravidians' right of self-determination.

Periyar called upon the Dravidar Kazahgam workers and the public to observe the Republic Day as the day of mourning. He and his cadres picketed the commercial venues of north Indians to oppose the north Indian domination and also to protect the interests of the Tamil handloom weavers.

He raged against the judgments of the Madras High Court and the Supreme Court of India against the reservation for backward castes in educational institutions in Madras Province. The Courts said that this was violative of Artilce 29(2) of the Constitution of India. Periyar convened the leaders of the non Brahmin community and organized a conference at Trichy in December on Communal Representation. He also organized several hundreds of meetings all over Tamil Nadu criticizing the Constitution. He organised black flag demonstrations against the Central ministers visiting Tamil Nadu.

The agitations launched by him to restore Communal Representation bore fruit. On 2nd June 1951, the first amendment to the Constitution was made. A new sub-clause 4 was included in Article 15 of the Constitution of India for guaranteeing constitutional validity for reservation in educational institutions for the backward classes>this amendment facilitated for reservation for scheduled castes and tribes in educational insittutuions. Dr B.R.Ambedkar played a crucial role in persuading Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Premier of Independent India to bring in this amendment.

Periyar and Dravidar Kazhagam differed with Ambedkar on certain aspects of India's foreign policy and also on Kashmir question. As against Ambedkar's proposal that Jammu and Kashmir be divided into three parts on religious lines and that Hindu and Buddhist majority parts be merged with India, Dravidar Kazhagam maintained that the question of self-determination of Kashmir must be decided by the Kashmir people themselves and that the armies of both India and Pakistan be pulled out. Dravidar Kazhagam disapproved of Ambedkar's opposition to bring into UN, the People's Republic of China and also his proposal that India should have a military alliance with US in order to reduce military expenses.In Dravidar Kazhagam's view such a thought itself would be detrimental to the interests of the very working people for whose leader Ambedkar was. It however welcomed Ambedkar's decision to quit Nehru's cabinet.

Periyar played a crucial role in seeing that the Congress did not get a majority in the erstwhile presidency of Madras in the first general elections conducted in 1952 on the basis of universal suffrage. He offered support to the Communist candidates in selected constituencies while working for the victory of others

whom he believed would fight for the implementation of principle of social justice of his movement.

Once Rajaji captured the power by getting nominated a member of the upper house of the Legislature by the then Governor of Madras Periyar launched a series of agitations. His papers and publications were confiscated several times and were asked to remit security deposits to run his daily *Viduthalai*. He launched the struggle to erase the Hindi words in the name boards in Railway Stations. In the local body elections, he used his energy to defeat the Communist candidates. Convinced of the need to have separate workers and peasant organizations for Dravidians, he floated Southern Railwaymen Associan and Dravida Vivasay Thozhilalar Sangham.

In 1953, Periyar paid tributes to Joseph Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union. He called him the last of the Great Men of the century. He celebrated Buddha Jeyanthi all over Tamil Nadu and organised state wide breaking of the idols of Vinayaka with a view to oppose idolatry. In Chennai city alone hundreds of Vinayaka idols were broken in a stretch of Mount Road where the offices of the dailies *The Hindu* and *Swadesamitran* considered by Periyar as the leading mouthpieces of Brahminical orthodoxy were located. Buddha Jeyanti was celebrated in a number of towns by the Dravidar Kazhagam members.

He toured the entire Tamil country to mobiles public opinion against the varnadharmic education system which Rajaji tried to introduce in the primary schools. According to this system the students were expected to attend the classes for a half a day and then in the afternoon, practice the traditional vocations of their families. He organized a Conference at Erode against Rajaji's education policy under the chairmanship of S.B.Adityan, Editor of *Thina Thanthi*. Following day a Buddhist Conference was conducted with Rajbhoj, M.P. and the General Secretary of All India Depressed Classes Association and Dr.Mallalasekara, leading Buddhist scholar from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) as Chief Guests.

With a view to unseat Rajaji from power and bring in Kamaraj, a non-Brahmin leader Periyar relaxed the intensity of the anti-Congress crusade he began in 1925. By getting Kamaraj elected in a bye-election, Periyar put an end to the Rajaji's education scheme. On August 1, he and his followers erased the Hindi words from the sign boards in Railway stations.

He went to Burma accompanied by Maniammai and participated in the World Buddhist Conference held on December 3 along with Dr.B.R.Ambedkar and Dr Mallalasekara. When persuaded by Dr Ambedkar to embrace Buddhism, Periyar told him that tactically and strategically he preferred to remain in 'Hindu' fold to challenge it from within since converting to other religions would deprive him of the right to speak against Hindu religion.

In 1955, protesting against the imposition of Hindi he announced that that the National Flag would be burnt across the Tamil Country. On getting the assurance from the State and Central governments that Hindi would not be a compulsory lesson for examinations, he temporarily withdrew the agitation.

The pictures of Rama were set to fire in hundreds of places across the Tamil country in 1955 under the direction of Periyar. He resolutely opposed the scheme of creating a 'Dakshin Pradesh' comprised of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in place of forming separate states on linguistic basis. He considered this scheme as a conspiracy to make the Tamils a minority in the new formation and establish the hegemony of Brahmins and other upper castes. He declared that the Tamil speaking areas alone would be the geographical boundaries of his Dravida Nadu. He wrote a tearful portrait of Dr.B.R.Ambedkar on the eve of his death. Periyar described him as a scholar par excellence and suspected a foul play in his death. In 1956, despite warnings from P. Kakkan, the President of the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee, Periyar organized a procession to the Marina in order to burn pictures of the Hindu God Rama. Periyar was subsequently arrested and confined to prison.

Vinoba Bhave, the Sarvodya leader met Periyar in Trichy in1957. When strictures were passed by the Brahmin judges against a very upright non Brahmin Collector of Tiruchirapalli district, Periyar toured the entire Tamil country vehementy criticising the judgment thus inviting Defamation of Court proceedings. Periyar filed a historic affidavit in the High Court of Madras justifying his criticism of the Brahmin judges. He organized agitations to erase the words 'Brahmin' in the sign boards of hotels and restaurants as it signified the casteist superiority of the Brahmins. The struggle continued for nearly an year against an unrelenting Hotel owner in Madras who finally agreed to remove the word from his hotel sign boards. Periyar always used such peaceful agitations as pedagogic exercises to teach and disseminate his self-respect ideas.

When unprecedented caste clashes took place in Ramanathapuram district of Tamil Nadu between upper castes led by the former Congressman and Forward Block Member of parliament Muthuramalinga Thevar, Periyar resolutely stood by the side of the Adi Dravidas and touring the country, urged the state government to unwaveringly suppress the upper caste elements who unleashed an orgy of violence and murder against the helpless Adi Dravidas. It is noteworthy that all the parliamentary parties including the Communists were agitated over the arrest of Muthuramalinga Thevar but not about the Adi Dravida victims.

At a special function at Thanjavur on 3.11.1957, he called upon the members and supporters of Dravidar Kazhagam to burn copies of the Indian Constitution which in his view, through Article 372 and connected Sections, protect the caste system. In response to his call nearly 10000 persons all over Tamil Nadu burnt the copies of the relevant parts of the Constitution on 26.11.1957 (the

Constitution day). The State repression was so severe that they were convicted and sentenced to imprisonment ranging from a period of six months to three years. Two of them died in prisons. Periyar was charged with acts of criminal instigation of his followers to assault the Brahmins with deadly weapons. He was sentenced to one and a half year imprisonment. The Tamil population rose in revolt against this harsh punishment.

The activities of Periyar continued when he went to Bangalore in 1958 to participate in the All India Official Language Conference. There he stressed the need to retain English as the Union Official Language instead of Hindi. He undertook a tour of north India during 1959 and addressed the meetings organized by the Republican Party of India in Kanpur, Lucknow, Delhi and Bombay. He also addressed a several meetings of College students there. With the funds collected from the people of Tamil Nadu, he bought the dilapidated and abandoned Tram Shed at Egmore in Chennai where he established his headquarters.

To gain support for his separate Tamil Nadu demand, he asked his followers to burn the map of India excluding the part that showed Tamil Nadu in 1960. He was arrested under Section 151 of Preventive Detention Act. He toured all over Tamil Nadu to mobilize support for the state government led by K.Kamraj as this ministry was implementing a number of schemes beneficial to backward classes and scheduled castes.

Periyar campaigned vigorously for the victory of Kamaraj led Congress in the general elections in 1962. He gave tentative support to Nehru as well on the ground that the latter was implementing socialist programmes. When the border war between India and China broke out, he went around and mobilized support for the Indian Government calling the Chinese aggressors. When Kamaraj mooted a plan in 1963 by which all the leading Congress leaders would give up offices and concentrate their energies to strengthen the party organization and set a precedence, Periyar unsuccessfully dissuaded him.

The Judgment of the Supreme Court invalidating the Tamil Nadu Land Ceiling Act passed by Kamaraj Government was condemned by Periyar who began mobilizing public opinion against the judgment in 1964. He condemned the deliberate attempt on the part of a section of the pro-Brahminical and anti-Kamraj press, which published inflammatory reports on the anti-Hindi agitations initiated by the students first and then joined by the DMK and argued that in view of the promise made by Nehru at the instance of Kamraj that English would continue to be used along with Hindi even after 1965, there was no need for a violent agitation in which innocent lives were lost and public and private property worth several crores damaged. Periyar stood his ground, despite the unpopularity his stance generated. He had the copies of Ramayana burnt in several parts of Tamil Nadu. Periyar continued with the Ramayana burning activity during 1965-66.

The anti-Hindi agitations of 1965, the rise of prices of essential commodities and certain anti-popular measures taken by M.Bhaktavatsalam who succeeded K.Kamaraj as the Chief Minister resulted in its rout in 1967 general elections despite Periyar's all out efforts to make it win. He owned it up as a personal defeat. But when the DMK that win the election turned around and sought his support and blessings, he unhesitatingly offered to stand by the DMK ministry led by C.N.Annadurai which in the best tradition of the non Brahmin movement tried to implement a number of social reforms. One of the first Government Orders issued by this Ministry asked all the government departments to remove the pictures of all gods and goddesses from the office venues. At Periyar's instance, Hindu Marriage Act (Central) 1955 was so amended in such a way as to make the Self-Respect marriages legally valid.

In 14.4.1968 was observed by him and his followers across Tamil Nadu as a day of condemnation of the rule of Delhi with a view to mobilize public opinion in support of his demand for an independent Tamil Nadu. He addressed a number of meetings in Lucknow in the month of October. Periyar condemned the violence in Kizhavenmani village in which 44 Adi Dravida agricultural workers were burnt to death by the landlord's henchmen. This was the result of the wage dispute and Periyar vehemently criticized the Communist led Kisan Sabhas for creating an atmosphere which resulted in such an atrocity.

After the demise of C.N.Annadurai, Periyar revived his agitation for the right of members of all castes to enter the sanctum sanctorum of the Hindu Temples. He announced that the agitation would be launched on 26.1.1970. Persuaded by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, Periyar postponed the 'sanctum sanctorum' entry agitation.

Periyar launched Thinker's Forum in Tiruchirapalli and Madras rationalist Association in March and September respectively and saw that branches of these fora were opened in hundreds of places in Tamil Nadu. In October he successfully launched the campaign to remove the word 'Brahmin' in the sign boards of the restaurants. In November he visited Mumbai and addressed meetings organized by his followers. Periyar launched the Tamil monthly *Unmai* to propagate rationalist thoughts and scientific ideas.

Periyar was happy that his demand to allow members of all castes to enter sanctum sanctorum was fulfilled to a great extent when the Tamil Nadu legislature on 2.12.1970 unanimously passed the amendments to the Hindu Religious Endowment Act which provided for the appointment of archakas (priests) from any caste. With assent of the Governor of Tamil Nadu This Act came into force in January 1971. Nearing Periyar's last years, an award was given to him by the UNESCO, and it was presented to him by the Union Education Minister, Triguna Sen in Madras on June 27, 1970.

In January Periyar organized a Conference for the Abolition of Superstition at Salem Town. Included in the anti-God pageantry that formed a part of the conference was an image of Rama and placards inscribed with word denigrating him and other gods and the obscenities in the Puranas. Volunteers of 'Hindu Mission', a far right organisation, threw chapels aimed at Periyar and other leaders. In retaliation, some of the enraged volunteers of the Dravidar Kazhagam beat the effigy of Rama with with chapels before setting it to fire. The Salem incident was twisted and misrepresented by the pro Brahminical press to suit the interests of the orthodoxy to whip up communal frenzy. Despite the hysterical reaction of the conservative forces that demanded a ban on Periyar's movement, the general public remained unperturbed. On the other hand, Periyar had similar acts of denigrating Rama replicated in several parts of Tamil Nadu.

The English monthly 'The Modern Rationalist' was launched by Periyar in September 1971. He entrusted the editorship of this journal to K.Veeramani, the General Secretary of Dravidar Kazhagam. In 1972, Periyar was enraged when the Supreme Court of India nullified the amendments to the Hindu Religious Endowment Act passed by the Tamil Nadu Government as violative of Articles 25 and 26 of Constitution of India. The Court quoted certain scriptures in support of its judgment and observed that the idols would become 'polluted' by the touch of outcastes. Periyar was convinced that the Supreme Court judgment has reasserted the Varna system and condemned the 97 percent of the population to shudrahood or the status of the sons and daughters of the concubines of the Brahmins.

In is 95th year, despite his failing health , he undertook intensive tour of Tamil Nadu and called upon the people to rise against the degradation imposed on them by the Brahminical caste order, which in his view, was now propped up by the Supreme Court Judgment. On 8th and 9th December 1973 he organized a Conference to remove the social degradation of Tamils. This happened to be the last Conference he addressed. The last public appearance was however on 19th December when he addressed a mammoth public meeting at Thyagaraya Nagar in Chennai. He made one of the most spirited and carping criticism of brahminical caste order, the Shastras and laws of the country that support them and the need for the shudras and panchamas to rebel and secure their self-respect and self-worth either by getting the Constitutional provisions that safeguard the caste order or by seceding from India to create and independent secular casteless Tamil Nadu.

On 20th December he was admitted in the Government General Hospital, Chennai. In a state of coma he was shifted a private hospital at Vellore near Chennai. As the treatment failed to revive him, be breathed his last at 7.40 AM on 24.12.1973. His body was brought to Chennai on 24.12.1973 for the public to pay homage. On 25.12.1973 he was laid to eternal rest at 'Periyar Thidal', the venue of the headquarters of Dravidar Kazhagam with State honours.

7. New Line of March

Periyar's political life began with Congress movement. Periyar associated himself with the Madras Presidency Association in 1917. He was one of its vice-presidents. When Mahatma Gandhi took the lead in the Indian National Congress, Periyar joined the organisation in 1919. He resigned 29 public posts he held at that time, including the municipal chairmanship of Erode town. He gave up his very lucrative wholesale dealership in grocery and agricultural products, and closed his newly begun spinning mill. Periyar wholeheartedly undertook the constructive programme - spreading the use of Khadi, picketing toddy shops, boycotting the shops selling foreign cloth and eradication of untouchability. He courted imprisonment for picketing toddy shops in Erode in 1921. When his wife as well as his sister joined the agitation, it gained momentum, and the administration was forced to come to a compromise.

In 1922, Periyar moved a resolution in the Tamil Nadu Congress Committee when it met at Tiruppur. The resolution required people of all castes to be allowed to enter and worship in all the temples, as a measure to end birth-based discrimination. Citing the authority of Vedas and other Hindu scriptures, the Brahmin members of the Committee opposed the resolution and stalled its passage. This reactionary stand of the members of upper Varna provoked Periyar to declare that he would burn Manu dharma Sastra, Ramayana etc. to show his disapproval to accept such scriptures to govern the social, religious and cultural aspects of the people.

Periyar's determination to bring about socio-cultural revolution impelled him to support even his opponents when they implemented his progressive scheme. Though a Congress leader, he supported in 1923, the Justice Party's measure to form Hindu Religious Endowment Board with a view to put an end to the age-old monopoly and exploitation of the upper castes in the managements of Hindu temples and religious endowments. Periyar participated in the Vaikom Satyagraha. This paved the way for the untouchables to use public roads without any inhibition and for other prospective egalitarian social measures.

The attitude of Periyar was greatly changed after the incidence of Sheranmadevi Gurukulum. The congressman V.V.S. Aiyar founded a school, traditionally called gurukulam, in 1922 at Sheranmadevi in Tirunelvelly district. The gurukulam was financed and supervised by the Provincial Congress Committee. The admission to the gurukulam was open to all irrespective of caste or creed. But the shocking fact was that in the Gurukulam Brahmin and non-Brahmin boys were made to sit separately in the dining room was noticed by Periyar and other non-Brahmin Congressmen. They bought it to the notice of Gandhiji who suggested a compromise that all students should dine in the same place, but the Brahmin cook may be permitted. V.V.S. Aiyar did not agree with this and insisted on separate dining for Brahmin boys. The non-Brahmin

strongly opposed the attitude of Aiyar and took the issue for fighting for the cause of social justice and vindicated the honour or non-Brahmins. Periyar and Varadarajulu Naidu brought out the irregularity in sanctioning Rs.5000 to the Gurukulam from congress fund and called for the refund of the same. This prompted V.V.S. Aiyar to resign from the Congress. This controversy clearly exposed the Brahmin non-Brahmin Conflict within the Congress.

The conflict between Brahmins and non-Brahmins came to a direct collision in TNCC conference in Kanchipuram in 1925. Non-Brahmin Congressmen felt that their grievances were not known to the public and the non-Brahmin leaders had no access to all India leaders like Gandhi to report their grievances. So Periyar moved two resolutions in the conference demanding communal representation in the Legislative Council. When the resolution was defeated by Brahmin lobby, Periyar and non-Brahmin Congressmen left the conference. This was a great turning point in the political career of Periyar and he began to turn away from Congress to form an organization of his own to fight for the cause of non Brahmins. The Congress Party in 1926 passed a resolution terminating the membership of Periyar in Congress for his having identified with the Justice Party. This finally severed the relations of Periyar with the Congress Party. Though Periyar allied himself with the justice party, he was disappointed to note that justice party had no definite programme for the benefit of the masses.

He made Congress synonymous with Brahmins. After severing his connection from the Congress Party, Periyar devoted wholly to the social reforms among the non-Brahmins. He was one of those who believed that social reform should precede political reform. For that, he began the Self-Respect Movement in 1926. The first provincial conference was held at Chengleput in 1929. The conference was a landmark in the history of the Dravidian Movement. Speeches and resolutions at the conference revealed the objects of the Self-Respect Movement. Following this, many Self-Respect conferences were held at district and taluk levels. Thousands of people including leaders of the justice party attended the conference.

Periyar spent over fifty years working towards educating the people through his speeches. He propagated the realization that everyone is an equal citizen and the differences on basis of caste and creeds were man-made to keep the innocent and ignorant as underdogs in the society. Although Periyar's speeches were targeted towards illiterate and more mundane mass, scores of educated people followed them. These educated elites earlier knew nothing about how a few were propagating blind beliefs and caste distinction for their own selfish ends.

Periyar considered reasoning as a special tool. According to him, all were blessed with his tool but very few use it. Thus it was reasoning that was used in Periyar's material, with respect to related subjects of social interest, presented to his audiences.

Periyar was not only a social revolutionary but also a champion of the underprivileged. His sphere of activity was wide and when he took up an issue he went deep into it, understanding the aspects, and did not rest until he found a permanent solution. Communal differences in Tamil society were deep-rooted and appeared to be permanent features until Periyar came to the scene.

The bedrock of Periyar's principles and the movements that he started was rationalism. What drew him to public service and made him dedicate his life to it was man's inhumanity to man. He found that an insignificant minority in society was exploiting the majority and trying to keep them in a subordinate position forever. To set matters right, he wanted the exploited to sit up and think about their position. Unless they exercised their reason, there wouldn't be a realization that they were being exploited by a handful of people. If they started thinking, they would realize that they were human beings like the rest, that birth did not and should not endow superiority over others, and that they must awaken themselves and do everything possible to improve their own lot.

It was not an easy task for Periyar to create this awakening among the people who had, for generations, got used to a subordinate position. Most of them did not know that their subordinate position had been brought about by the cunning schemes of self-seekers. Thus, Periyar spoke to the people on innumerable platforms, over the years to arouse their thinking power.

Likewise, Periyar explained that wisdom lies in thinking and that the spear-head of thinking is rationalism. On caste, he stated that no other living being harms or degrades its own class. But man, said to be a rational living being does these evils. The differences, hatred, enmity, degradation, poverty, and wickedness, now prevalent in the society are due to lack of wisdom and rationalism and not due to God or the cruelty of time.

Periyar also blamed the capitalists for their control of machineries, creating difficulties to the workers. Consequently rationalism, which has to lead the way for peaceful life to all, had resulted in causing poverty and worries to the people because of dominating forces. He went on to explain that there is no use of simply acquiring titles or amassing wealth if one has no self-respect and scientific knowledge. An example he showed was the West sending messages to the planets, while the Tamil society in India were sending rice and cereals to their dead fore-fathers through the Brahmins.

In a message to the Brahmin community, Periyar stated, "in the name of god, religion, and sastras you have duped us. We were the ruling people. Stop this life of cheating us from this year. Give room for rationalism and humanism". He further explained that "any opposition not based on rationalism, science, or experience will one day or another, reveal the fraud, selfishness, lies and conspiracies".

Periyar's philosophy of self-respect, was based on his image of an ideal world and a universally accepted one. It is a philosophy preaching that human actions should be based on rational thinking. Further, it is an outcome of the natural instinct of human beings to examine every object and every action and even nature with a spirit of inquiry; and to refuse to submit to anything irrational as equivalent to slavery. Thus, the philosophy of Self-Respect taught that human actions should be guided by reason; right and wrong should follow from rational thinking, and; conclusions drawn from reason should be respected under circumstances. Freedom means respect to thoughts and actions considered 'right' by human beings on the basis of 'reason'. There is not much difference between 'freedom' and 'self-respect'.

Periyar's foremost appeal to people was to develop self-respect. He preached that the Brahmins have monopolized and cheated other communities for decades and deprived them of self-respect. He continued to remind them that most Brahmins claimed to belong to a "superior" community with the reserved privilege of being in charge of temples and performing archanas. He felt that they were trying to reassert their control over religion by using their superior caste status to claim the exclusive privilege to touch idols or enter the sanctum sanctorum. He claimed that in certain places the scheduled caste people were not allowed to use the tanks, wells and at times even the streets used by Brahmins. Though sporadic caste-violence and atrocities continue to occur in Tamil Nadu, discrimination has largely been eliminated due to Periyar's agitations against these unjust restrictions.

As a rationalist and ardent social reformer, Periyar advocated forcefully, throughout his life, that women should be given their legitimate position in society as the equals of men and that they should be given good education and also the right to property. He was keen that women should realize their rights and be worthy citizens of their country.

Periyar fought against the orthodox traditions of marriage as suppression of women in Tamil Nadu and throughout the Indian sub-continent. Though arranged marriages were meant to enable a couple to live together throughout life, it was manipulated to enslave women. Much worse was the practice of child marriages practiced throughout India at the time. It was believed that it would be a sin to marry after puberty. Another practice, which is prevalent today, is the dowry system where the bride's family is supposed to give the husband a huge payment for the bride. The purpose of this was to assist the newly wedded couple financially, but in many instances dowries were misused by bridegrooms. The outcome of this abuse turned to the exploitation of the bride's parents wealth, and in certain circumstances, lead to dowry deaths. There have been hundreds of thousands of cases where wives have been murdered, mutilated, and burned alive because the father of the bride was

unable to make the dowry payment to the husband. Periyar fiercely stood up against this abuse meted out against women.

Women in India also did not have rights to their families' or husbands' property. Periyar fought fiercely for this and also advocated for the women to have the right to separate or divorce their husbands under reasonable circumstances. While birth control remained taboo in society of Periyar's time, he advocated for it not only for the health of women and population control, but for the liberation of women.

He criticized the hypocrisy of chastity for women and argued that it should also either belong to men, or not at all for both individuals. While fighting against this, Periyar advocated to get rid of the Devadasi system. In his view it was an example of a list of degradations of women attaching them to temples for the entertainment of others, and as temple prostitutes. As a further liberation of women, Periyar pushed for the right of women to have an education and to join the armed services and the police force.

Periyar and his movement have achieved a better status for women in Tamil society. It was his conviction that in matters of education and employment there should be no difference between men and women. There was a time when no girl opted for engineering studies, or parents thought of sending their daughter to an engineering college. Today, lots of young women can be found studying at engineering and medical colleges in Tamil Nadu.

His influence in the State departments and even the Center have made it possible for women to join police departments and having posts in the army. Periyar was engaged in strenuous propaganda against child marriage and now the government has fixed the minimum age for the marriage of girls to be eighteen. Through his advocacy for the equality of men and women, girls started to receive rights over ancestral property along with male children. Considering the growth in the percentage of Indian population, there are State governments encouraging birth control now. Periyar confronted this problem even over fifty years ago. He advised married people to limit the birth of children so that both men and women can be able to contribute their society. In one of his meetings he even wondered why the scientists should not think of producing test tube babies.

Periyar wanted thinking people to realize that their society was far from perfect and that it is in urgent need of reform. He wanted the Government, the political parties and social workers to identify the evils in society and boldly adopt measures to remove them. Periyar's philosophy did not differentiate social and political service. According to him, the first duty of a government is to run the social organization efficiently, and that the philosophy of religion was to organize the social system. Periyar pointed out that while Christian and Islamic religions were fulfilling this role, the Hindu religion remained totally unsuitable

for social progress. Conditions appeared to him such that the government was not for the people, but, in a "topsy-turvey" manner, the people were for the government. He attributed this situation to the state of the social system contrived for the advantage of a small group of people.

One of the areas of Periyar's focus was on the upliftment of rural communities. In a booklet called Village Uplift, Periyar plead for rural reform. It should be stressed in this context that rural India still forms the largest part of the Indian subcontinent in spite of the ongoing process of urbanization. Thus, the distinction between rural and urban has meant an economic and social degradation for the rural inhabitant. Periyar wanted to eradicate the concept of "village" as a discrimination word among places just as the concept outcast among social groups. Periyar advocated for a location where neither the name nor the situation or its conditions imply differences among people. He further advocated for the modernization of villages by providing public facilities such as schools, libraries, radio stations, roads, bus transport, and police stations.

Periyar felt that a small number of cunning people created caste distinctions in order to dominate over society. That was why he emphasized the view that we must first develop self-respect and learn to analyze propositions rationally. A self-respecting rationalist will readily realize that caste system has been stifling self-respect and therefore he will strive to get rid of this menace.

Periyar explained that the caste system in south India is, due to Indo-Aryan influence, linked with the arrival of Brahmins from the north. Ancient Tamil Nadu (part of Tamilakkam) had a different stratification of society in four or five regions (Tinai), determined by natural surroundings and adequate means of living. Periyar also mentions that birds, animals, and worms, which are considered to be devoid of rationalism do not create castes, or differences of high and low in their own species. But man considered to be a rational being, is suffering from these because of religion. He further explains that amongst dogs you do not have a Brahmin dog, or a Pariah (untouchable) dog. Among donkeys and monkeys we also do not find such things. But, amongst men there is such discrimination.

Periyar claimed that Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, and Kannada came from the same tongue, or same mother language of Old Tamil. He explained that the Tamil language is called by four different names since it is spoken in four different Dravidian states,and thus she has four different names. With relation to writing, Periyar stated that using the Tamil script about the arts which are useful to the people in their life and which foster knowledge, talent and courage, and propagating them among the masses, thereby will enlighten the people. Further, he explained that it will enrich the language, and thus it can be regarded as a zeal for Tamil. Periyar also stated that if words of North Indian origin (Sanskrit) are removed from Telugu, Kannada, and Malayalam all that will be left will only be Tamil. On the Brahmin usage of Tamil, he stated how

the Tamil spoken by the Andrhas and the Malayalee peoples were far better than the Tamil spoken by the Brahmins. Periyar believed that Tamil language will make the Dravidian people unite under the banner of Tamil culture, and that it will make the Kannadigas, Andhras and the Malayalees be vigilant. With regards to a Dravidian alliance under a common unbrella language, Periyar stated that "a time will come for unity. This will go on till there is an end to the North Indian domination. We shall reclaim an independent sovereign state for us".

At the same time, Periyar was also known to have issued controversial remarks on Tamil language and Tamil people from time to time. On one occasion, he referred to Tamil people as "barbarians" and Tamil language as the "language of barbarians". However, Anita Diehl explains that Periyar made these remarks on Tamil because it had no respective feminine verbal forms.

Periyar's ideas on Tamil alphabet reforms and his reasons were for the following such as the vowel 'ி' (i), having a cursive and looped representation of the short form, 'இ' (I). In stone inscriptions of 400 or 500 years ago, many Tamil letters are found in other shapes. As a matter of necessity and advantage to cope with the printing technology, Periyar thought that it was sensible to change a few letters, reduce the number of letters, and alter a few signs. He further explained that the older and the more divine a language and its letters were said to be, they need reform. Because of changes brought about by means of modern transport and international contact, and happenings that have attracted words and products from many countries, foreign words and their pronunciations have been assimilated into Tamil quite easily. Just as a few compound characters have separate signs to indicate their length as in ' கா ' , ' கே ' (kA: , kE:), Periyar argued why should not other compound characters like ' கி ' , ' கீ ' , 'கு ' , ' கூ ' (kI, ki:,kU, ku:) (indicated integrally as of now), also have separate signs. Further, changing the shape of letters, creating new symbols and adding new letters and similarly, dropping those that are redundant, were quite essential according to Periyar. Thus, the glory and excellence of a language and its script depend on how easily they can be understood or learned and on nothing else".

Periyar hailed the Thirukkural as a valuable scripture which contained many scientific and philosophical truths. He also praised the secular nature of the work. Periyar praised Thiruvalluvar for his description of God as a formless entity with all positive attributes. He also suggested that one who reads the Thirukkural will became a Self-respecter absorbing knowledge in politics, society, and economics. Though certain items in this ancient book of ethics may not relate to today, Periyar explained that it permits such changes for today's society.

On caste, he showed that the Kural illustrates how Vedic laws of Manu was against the Sudras and other communities of the Dravidian race. On the other hand, Periyar opined that the ethics from the Kural was comparable to the Christian Bible. The Dravidar Kazhagam adopted the Thirukkural and advocated that Thiruvalluvar's Kural alone was enough to educate the people of the country. One of Periyar's quotes on the Thirukkural from Veeramani's Collected Works of Periyar was "when Dravida Nadu (Dravidistan) was a victim to Indo-Aryan deceit, Thirukkural was written by a great Dravidian Thiruvalluvar to free the Dravidians".

The Dravidian-Aryan conflict was believed to be a continuous historical phenomenon that started when the Aryans first set their foot in the Dravidian lands. Even a decade before the idea of separation appeared, Periyar stated that, "as long as Aryan religion, Indo-Aryan domination, propagation of Aryan Vedas and Aryan "Varnashrama" existed, there was need for a "Dravidian Progressive Movement" and a "Self-Respect Movement". Periyar became very concerned about the growing north Indian domination over the south which appeared to him no different from foreign domination. He wanted to secure the fruits of labor of the Dravidians to the Dravidians, and lamented that fields such as political, economic, industrial, social, art, and spiritual were dominated by the north for the benefit of the north Indians. Thus, with the approach of independence from Britain, this fear that North India would take the place of Britain to dominate south India became more and more intense.

Periyar was clear about the concept of a separate multi-linguistic nation, comprising of Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada areas, that is roughly corresponding to the then existing Madras Presidency with adjoining areas into a federation guaranteeing protection of minorities, including religious, linguistic, and cultural freedom of the people. A separatist conference was held in June 1940 at Kanchipuram when Periyar released the map of the proposed Dravida Nadu, but failed to get British approval. On the contrary, Periyar received sympathy and support from people such as Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar and Muhammad Ali Jinnah for his views on the Congress, and for his opposition to Hindi. They then decided to convene a movement to resist the Congress.

The concept of Dravida Nadu was later modified down to Tamil Nadu This led to a proposal of a union of the Tamil people of not only South India but including those of Ceyon as well. In 1953, Periyar helped to preserve Madras as the capital of Tamil Nadu, which later was the name he substituted for the more general Dravida Nadu. In 1955 Periyar threatened to burn the national flag, but on Chief Minister Kamaraj's pledge that Hindi should not be compulsory he postponed the action. In his speech of 1957 called Cutantara Tamil Nadu En? (Why an independent Tamil Nadu?), he criticized the Central Government of India inducing thousands of Tamilians to burn the constitution of India. The reason for this action was that Periyar held the Government responsible for

maintaining the caste system. After stating reasons for separation and turning down opinions against it he closed his speech with a "war cry" to join and burn the map of India on June 5. Periyar was sentenced to six months imprisonment for burning the Indian constitution.

Advocacy of such a nation became illegal when separatist demands were banned by law in 1957. Regardless of these measures, a Dravida Nadu Separation Day was observed on September 17, 1960 resulting in numerous arrests. However, Periyar resumed his campaign in 1968. He wrote an editorial on 'Tamil Nadu for Tamilians' in which he stated, that by nationalism only Brahmins had prospered and nationalism had been developed to abolish the rights of Tamils. He advocated that there was need to establish a Tamil Nadu Freedom Organization and that it was necessary to work towards it.

Periyar was a radical advocate of anti-Brahmanism. His anti-brahmanism was evident from his comments to his followers that if they encountered a Brahmin and a snake on the road they should kill the Brahmin first. He also used violent and vulgar language in his writings against Hindu gods.

In 1920 when the Justice Party came to power, Brahmins occupied about 70 percent of the high level posts in government. After reservation was introduced by the Justice Party, it reversed this trend, allowing non-brahmins to rise in the government of the Madras Presidency. Periyar, through the Justice Party, advocated against the imbalance of the domination of Brahmins who constituted only 3 percent of the Population over Government jobs, judiciary and the Madras University. His Self-Respect Movement espoused rationalism and atheism, and although Periyar had Brahmin colleagues, the movement had currents of anti-Brahminism. Furthermore, Periyar stated that:

"Our Dravidian movement does not exist against the Brahmins or the Banias (a North Indian merchant caste). If anyone thinks so, I would only pity him. But we will not tolerate the ways in which Brahminism and the Bandiaism is degrading Dravidanadu. Whatever support they may have from the government, neither myself nor my movement will be of cowardice".

Periyar also criticized Subramanya Bharathi in the journal Ticutar for portraying Mother Tamil as a sister of Sanskrit in his poems:

"They say Bharati is an immortal poet.…Even if a rat dies in an akrakāram, they would declare it to be immortal.…All of Tamilnadu praises him. Why should this be so? Supposedly because he sang fulsome praises of Tamil and Tamilnadu. What else could he sing? His own mother tongue, Sanskrit, has been dead for years. What other language did he know? He cannot sing in Sanskrit.…He says Tamilnadu is the land of Aryas."

In the Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924, Periyar and Gandhi both cooperated and confronted each other in socio-political action. Periyar and his followers emphasized the difference in point of view between Gandhi and himself on the social issues, such as fighting the Untouchability Laws and eradication of the caste system.

According to the booklet Gandhi and Periyar Periyar wrote in his paper Kudi Arasu, in 1925, reporting on the fact that Gandhi was ousted from the Maha Sabha, because he opposed resolutions for the maintaining of caste and Untouchability Laws which would spoil his efforts to bring about Hindu-Muslim unity. From this Gandhi learned the need of pleasing the Brahmins if anything was to be achieved.[86] Peiryar in his references to Gandhi used opportunities to present Gandhi as on principle serving the interests of the Brahmins. in 1927, Periyar and Gandhi met at Bangalore to discuss this matter. The main difference between them came out when Periyar stood for the total eradication of Hinduism to which Gandhi objected saying that Hinduism is not fixed in doctrines but can be changed. In the Kudi Arasu, Periyar explained that:

"With all his good qualities, Gandhi did not bring the people forward from foolish and evil ways. His murderer was an educated man. Therefore nobody can say this is a time of high culture. If you eat poison you will die. If electricity hits the body you will die. If you oppose the Brahmin you will die. Gandhi did not advocate the eradication of Varnasrama Dharma structure but sees in it a task for the humanization of society and social change possible within its structure. The consequence of this would be continued high-caste leadership. Gandhi adapted Brahmins to social change without depriving them of their leadership".

Thus, Gandhi did not advocate the eradication of the Varnasrama Dharma structure but saw in it a task for the humanization of society and social change possible within its structure. The consequence of this would be continued high-caste leadership. Gandhi accepted karma in the sense that "the Untouchables reap the reward of their karma, but was against discrimination against them using the revaluing term Harijans. As shown in the negotiations at Vaikom his methods of abolishing discrimination were: to stress on the orthodox inhumane treatment of Untouchables; to secure voluntary lifting of the ban by changing the hearts of caste Hindus; and to work within a Hindu framework of ideas.

On the Temple Entry issue Gandhi never advocated the opening of Garbha Griha to Harijans in consequence of his Hindu belief. These sources which can be labelled "pro-Periyar" with the exception of M. Mahar and D.S. Sharma, clearly show that Periyar and his followers emphasized that Periyar was the real fighter for the removal of Untouchability and the true uplift of Hairjans, whereas Gandhi was not. This did not prevent Periyar from having faith in Gandhi on certain matters.

Periyar was generally regarded as a pragmatic propagandist who attacked the evils of religious influence on society, mainly what he regarded as Brahmin domination. At a young age, he felt that some people used religion only as a mask to deceive innocent people and considered it as his life's mission to warn people against superstitions and priests. Anita Diehl explains that Periyar cannot be called an atheist philosopher. Periyar, however, qualified for the definition of what the term 'atheist' implies in his address on philosophy. He repudiated the term as without real sense: "…the talk of the atheist should be considered thoughtless and erroneous. The thing I call god... that makes all people equal and free, the god that does not stop free thinking and research, the god that does not ask for money, flattery and temples can certainly be an object of worship. For saying this much I have been called an atheist, a term that has no meaning".

Anita Diehl explains that Periyar was against incompatibility of faith with social equality and not religion itself. In a book on revolution published in 1961, Periyar stated, "be of help to people. Do not use treachery or deceit. Speak the truth and do not cheat. That indeed is service to God".

On Hinduism, Periyar believed that it was a religion with no distinctive sacred book, or origins, but to be an imaginary faith preaching the "superiority" of the Brahmins, the inferiority of the Shudras, and the untouchability of the Dalits (Panchamas). Maria Misra, a lecturer at Oxford University, compares him to the philosophes, by stating, "his contemptuous attitude to the baleful influence of Hinduism in Indian public life is strikingly akin to the anti-Catholic diatribes of the enlightenment philosophes". In 1955, Periyar was arrested for his public agitation of burning the pictures of Rama at public places, as a symbolic protest against the Indo-Aryan domination and degradation of the Dravidian leadership according to the Ramayana epic. Periyar also shoed the images of Krishna and Rama, stating that they were Aryan gods that considered the Dravidian Shudras to be "sons of prostitutes".

Periyar openly suggested to those who were marginalized within the Hindu communities to consider converting to other faiths such as Islam, Christianity, or Buddhism. On Islam, he stated how it was good for abolishing the disgrace in human relationship, based on one of his speeches to railway employees at Tiruchirapalli in 1947. Periyar also commended Islam for its belief in one invisible and formless God; proclamation of equal rights for men and women; and advocating of social unity.

At the rally in Tiruchi, Periyar said, "Muslims are following the ancient philosophies of the Dravidians. The Arabic word for Dravidian religion is Islam. When Brahmanism was imposed in this country, it was Mohammad Nabi who opposed it, by instilling the Dravidian religion's policies as Islam in the minds of the people"

Periyar viewed Christianity similar to the monotheistic faith of Islam. He explained that their faith says that there can be only one God which has no name or shape. Periyar took an interest in Rev. Martin Luther, where both he an this followers wanted to liken him and his role to that of the European reformer. Thus, Christian views such as that of Ram Mohan Roy's The Precepts of Jesus has had at least an indirect influence on Periyar.

Apart from Islam and Christianity, Periyar also found in Buddhism a basis for his philosophy though he did not accept that religion. It was again an alternative in the search for self-respect and the object was to get liberation from the discrimination of Hinduism. Through Periyar's movement Temple Entry Acts of 1924, 1931, and up to 1950 were created for the non-Brahmins. Another accomplishment took place during the 1970s when Tamil replaced Sanskrit as the Temple language in Tamil Nadu, while Dalits were finally eligible for priesthood.

In response to Hindu processions during Ganesha Chathurthi and Ram Navami, Periyar led processions which slippered and broke idols of Rama, Lakshmana and Pillaiyar. Though Periyar claimed to follow peaceful means of protest, nevertheless, these processions often caused violent clashes between Periyar's followers and theists, represented in modern times by right-wing organisations as Hindu Munnani and Hindu Makkal Katchi. From time to time, activists of the Dravidar Kazhagam have also launched physical attacks on Brahmins. Tempers reached a boiling point when a member of the Dravidar Kazhagam tried to assassinate Rajagopalachari. The attack was, however, unsuccessful and was severely condemned by Periyar who prohibited the usage of violence.

8. Self-Respect Movement

Periyar's philosophy is that different sections of a society should have equal rights to enjoy the fruits of the resources and the development of the country; they should all be represented, in proportion to their numerical strength, in the governance and the administration of the state. This principle had been enunicated earlier by those who stood for social justice, particularly by the South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as Justice Party. Periyar's unique contribution was his insistence on rational outlook to bring about intellectual emancipation and a healthy world-view. He also stressed the need to abolish the hierarchal, graded, birth-based caste structure as a prelude to build a new egalitarian social order. In other words, he wanted to lay a sound socio-cultural base, before raising a strong structure of free polity and prosperous economy.

It was in this context, the Self-Respect Movement, founded in 1925, carried on' a vigorous and ceaseless propaganda, against ridiculous and harmful superstitions, traditions, customs and habits. He wanted to dispel the ignorance of the people and make them enlightened. He exhorted them to take steps to change the institutions and values that led to meaningless divisions and unjust discrimination. He advised them to change according to the requirements of the changing times and keep pace with the modern conditions.

Self-respecters performed marriages without Brahmin priests (prohits) and without religious rites. They insisted on equality between men and women in all walks of life. They encouraged inter-caste and widow marriages. Periyar propagated the need for birth control even from late 1920s. He gathered support for lawful abolition of Devadasi (temple prostitute) system and the practice of child marriage. It was mainly due to his consistent and energetic propaganda, the policy of reservations in job opportunities in government administration was put into practice in the then Madras Province (which included Tamilnadu) in 1928.

Though the Self-Respect movement was started in 1925, the first provincial conference was organised by Periyar at Chengalpet (near Chennai and Kanchipuram) only in February 1929. It was presided over by W.P. Soundarapandian. M.R Jeyakar was the president of the second conference conducted at Erode in 1930. Sir RK. Shanmugam occupied the chair in the third provincial conference that met at Viruthunagar. Apart from enthusing the people, these conferences passed resolutions meant to promote Caste eradication, Social integration and equal rights to women.

Since the British rulers in India had no vested interest in perpetuating the inequitable Varna-Jaathi social structure based on Vedic Sanathana Dharma, Periyar and his followers found that they could influence or pressurise the alien

government to take measures to remove social inequality. So they adopted a moderate policy in the struggle for political independence.

From the beginning of 1930s, Periyar added the programme of fighting for economic equality to his original programme of working for social equality and Cultural Revolution. Along with the veteran communist leader Com. M.Singaravel, he organised industrial and agricultural labourers to stand against the exploitation of big capitalists and landlords. In mid -1930's, the central and provincial governments took steps to ban the Communist Party and the organisations purported to have similar programmes. They started to stop the activities of the Self-Respect Movement. Periyar had to take a crucial decision. He had known by experience that there were supporters for the work to carry on the freedom struggle and to organise the labourers. But only a few came forth to expose the religion based traditional evils, and struggle against the exploitation of the powerful Brahminical upper castes. Under this circumstance, he toned down his socialist activities in order to be free to carry on the task of the socio-cultural emancipation of the disadvantaged and the downtrodden sections.

Meanwhile Periyar floated a separate party named Samadharma Party of South India. The Constitution of the Samadharma Party of South India appeared in Kuti Arasu on 1st January 1933. The Aims and Ideals of the Self-Respect Party of South India are:

1. The statement of complete independence from the British and other forms of capitalist governments.

2. The cancellation of all national debts.

3. Public ownership of railways, banks, shipping and other transport services and waters and lands, etc.

4. Public ownership without compensation of all agricultural lands, forests and lands, etc.

5. Cancellation of all private debts and other obligations incurred by the workers and peasants.

6. Changing of all Native States into one common Indian Federation under the rule of the workers and peasants of India.

7. Improving the lives of the workers and peasants of the land by securing for them more than seven hours labour, increased wages, State aid for their unemployed, health resorts, free libraries and other cultural facilities.

8. These shall form the main ideals of the Self-Respect Party.

The preamble of Self-Respect League: Samadharma Party of South India reads:

- Whereas, the Self-Respect Party, during the past eight years has very largely succeeded in rousing the attention of the mass people to the enormity of their superstitious habits, customs, and practices of their religion and caste, and of their degraded economic conditions of life,

- Whereas, it is becoming increasingly evident that such irrational religious and caste habits and customs and their low economic conditions of life, cannot be done away with, except through state action, and,

- Whereas, it is further evident that the various political, social and religious bodies and institutions are ever more determined to hold the masses in social, religious and economic bandage and degradation, through their political organisation all over the country, and,

- Whereas, the safeguards adopted by the Round Table Conference for the perpetuation of pernicious religious practices of inhuman caste distinctions are inimical to and destructive of all rational life of the masses,

Ten point objectives of the party were also framed.

1. To obtain by constitutional means and methods, the repeal of all irrational safeguards for the private enjoyment of public utilities, for all harmful religious and caste practices and habits, and thereby free the masses from their degrading religious and caste superstitions and habits and improve their economic life.

2. To obtain the adoption of adult suffrage for election of members to all Government, Legislative and Municipal bodies, Local, Provincial and Central.

3. To obtain security of service and minimum wage, to all workers in public and private utility services, such as factories, workshops, railways, shipping, transport, post and telegraph, etc.

4. To get for the landless workers and agricultural labourers working in cultivable lands, estates, and waters, a reasonable shari6in the produce of such lands, estates and waters.

5. To obtain state sanction for utilising temple, church, mosque and religious funds and incomes, for the education, both literary and vocational. for sanitation and housing of the mass population in the country, and for the maintenance of destitute children and orphans.

6. To obtain the removal of all caste distinctions among all castes, sects and classes of the Indian community, by removing all caste titles, from all public records and making such retention of caste titles as disability to hold any kind of public service.

7. To secure through state action, municipalisation of housing, transport, milk and medical service and establishment of nurseries in Municipalities, Taluk and District Boards and Village Unions.

8. To set up party candidates to the Legislative Councils, Taluk, District, and Village Boards and Unions and Panchayats, to secure the aforesaid objects of the party.

9. Party candidates pledged to the various objects of the party will be elected for the various Legislative Councils, Taluk and District Boards, Village Unions etc.

10. These various measures, acts, and reforms shall be obtained through all constitutional means and methods such as council entry and propaganda by means of lectures discussions and discourses as well as through the press.

In 1934, there was an unsuccessful move through C.Rajagopalachari, known as Rajaji, to bring Periyar back into the fold of the Congress Party. Periyar prepared a programme of action consisting of measures to promote Social Justice, through reservations, to implement socialisation of vital and large-scale commercial and industrial activities, and to remove the hardships of the debt-ridden peasants. He sent the programme to the ruling Justisce Party and the Congress Party that was growing popular. The Congress Party did not accept it, as the policy of reservation was not agreeable to it. As Justice Party agreed to most of the measures including communal representation to uphold Social Justice, Periyar continued to support it.

In 1937, Justice Party that was in power in the then Madras Province from 1921, except for a brief period, lost the elections to the Congress Party. Rajagopalachari who introduced compulsory study of Hindi language in the high schools headed the Congress Government. Those who opposed this effort to make non-Hindi speaking people second-class citizens organised a vigorous agitation under the dynamic leadership of Periyar. More than 1200 persons including women with children were imprisoned in 1938, of which two, Thalamuthu and Natarasan, lost their lives due to the rigours in prison. When

the agitation gained momentum Periyar was sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for two years, though released in six months (Periyar was in gaol five times in 1920s and four times in 1930s).

In November 1938, a women's conference in Madras (now Chennai) passed a resolution to refer to E.V.Ramasamy always as Periyar (the great man.).
While undergoing imprisonment, the Justice Party elected him as its President on 29th December 1938.

Periyar who opposed compulsory study of Hindi in the then Madras Province was sentenced to undergo rigorous imprisonment for two years. But he was released after about six months of confinement from 26th November 1938 to 22nd May 1939. After his release, he announced that he would continue his agitation against the imposition of Hindi.

We have seen that Periyar was elected while he was in prison, as the leader of the South Indian Liberal Federation, popularly known as Justice Party, in its Provincial Conference held in Madras (Chennai) on 29, 30 December 1938. He was basically a fighter for human rights for all from the beginning to the end of his public life. Now he added a new dimension to his movement, viz., and demand for an independent Dravida Naadu. He was driven to make this demand in 1938-39, because he found the Brahminical upper castes, whom he opposed for their social oppression, were in league with the North Indian Bania community (comprador capitalists) in imposing Hindi and in exploiting economically the people of South India.

Periyar's concept of Dravidians was not based on the purity of blood related to a race, but on values and ways of life. The Brahminical upper castes who followed the discriminatory socio-cultural principles, practices and traditions of Varna-Jaathi (caste system) originally enunicated in the Sanskrit scriptures like Vedas, Ithihaasas, Puraanas, Dharma Sastras etc. are Aryans. Those who subscribe to the egalitarian Tamil tradition and values of humanism are Dravidians. It may be recalled here that while addressing the conference of Backward Classes and Scheduled.Castes in Kanpoor in Uttar Pradesh in December 1944, he appealed to the Non-Brahmins of North- India to give up the religious appellation of Hindu and call themselves as Dravidians.

The Second World War broke out in September 1939. As a protest against the British rulers involving India in the war without consulting the High Command of their party, the Congress ministries in Madras and seven other Provinces resigned on 29th October of the same year. As Periyar was the leader of the opposition Justice Party, he was asked by the Governor and Governor general twice in 1940 and 1942 to form the ministry. Though a Congress leader, his friend C.Rajagopalachari personally requested Periyar to accept the offer, assuring his outside support to the Justice Party ministry. He explained that he wanted to put an end to the rule of the Governor and his advisers. But Periyar

refused to head the Provincial Government on both the occasions. His refusal was on two grounds: First, he felt it improper to form the ministry without a popular mandate. Secondly, he firmly believed that his main task of annihilating caste system and spreading rational humanist principles would receive a set back, if he assumed power.

Periyar left for Mumbai (Bombay) on 5th January 1940. Dr. B.R.Ambedkar gave dinner- parties twice in his honour. They' met the Muslim League leader M.A.Jinnah at his residence in Mumbai on 8th January 1940. Periyar explained then his decision to work for an independent State known as Dravida Naadu.

On 21st January 1940, the Madras provincial Government ruled by the Governor and his advisers abolished the compulsory study of Hindi in schools. M.A.Jinnah sent a telegram to Periyar congratulating him on the success of his endeavour to ward off the imposition of Hindi.

When the Justice Party was defeated in the 1937 general elections after being in power for a very long spell from 1921, most of its leaders were disheartened and became inactive. It was at this moment of crisis, Periyar accepted the leadership of the party because he always felt the need for the existence of a vigorous political party essentially oriented to work for the upliftment of the socially deprived sections of the people. At this critical movement, two of the old guards staunchly stood by him. They were Sir R.K.Shanmugam and Sir A.T. Panneerselvam. At the time, the former was the Dewan of the Princely State of Kochi (now a part of Kerala) and then became Independent India's first finance minister in 1947. The latter was a member of the Governor's council and then a minister in Madras province in 1930s. On 1st March 1940, he lost his life in a plane crash while flying over Oman Sea on his way to London where he was to assume office as an adviser to the Secretary of State for India in the British Government. Periyar lamented that the sudden and tragic demise of Panneerselvam was an irreparable loss to the people of Tamil Nadu.

The 15th State Conference of the Justice Party was held in Tiruvarur in August 1940. It was on this occasion, Chinnakancheepuram Natarajan Annadurai (C.N.A.), respectfully mentioned later as Arignar Anna, became the Joint Secretary of the Party. He fascinated the youth by his unique style of writing and oratory. He played a great role in popularising the principles, policies and programmes of Periyar through his essays, short stories, novels and plays.

In February 1941, the founder-leader of Radical Democratic Party, M.N.Roy, came to Chennai and stayed as Periyar's guest. He sought Periyar's cooperation to form a grand All India alliance against the Congress Party. Both of them supported the war efforts of Great Britain as they considered British Imperialism a lesser evil than the Fascism of Mussolini, Nazism of Hitler and the Militarism of Tojo.

As a result of Periyar's persistent demand, the degrading practice of serving separately the Brahmins and the 'others' in the restaurants in railway stations was abolished in March 1941.

The conservative section in the Justice Party disliked Periyar's radical social reform programme, his critical view of religious literature and the propagation of rationalist ideas. Unmindful of their opposition, he continued his onward march and gathered around him the youth and the common people. It was during this period in 1942-43 that Maniammai joined the movement and came to attend to the personal needs of Periyar. She was devoted to the leader and served him sincerely. They married later in 1949.

9. The Dravidar Kazhagam

The Justice Party's provincial conference held in Salem on 27th August 1944 marked a turning point in Periyar's movement. The name of the Party was changed as Dravidar Kazhagam. The members were asked to give up the posts, positions and titles conferred by the British rulers. They were also required to drop the caste suffix of their names. It was also decided that the members of the movement should not contest the elections. In other words, the Justice Party, which was political, was transformed into Dravidar Kazhagam and became a non-political socio-cultural movement. It remains so even today.

It was in the historic Salem conference, Periyar allowed Mr. K.Veeramani, the present President of Dravidar Kazhagam, who had not yet completed 11 years then, to stand on the table and address the gathering. Arignar Anna introduced him to the audience as the Thiru Gnanasambandar of the Self-respect movement. In the last week of December 1944 and in the first week of January 1945, Periyar undertook a tour of North India. On 27th December 1944, he spoke in a conference of the Radical Democratic Party in Calcutta. M.N.Roy introduced him to those assembled as his atheist preceptor. In 1945, a volunteer corps of black shirts was organised.

The Dravidar Kazhagam flag, in the ratio of 3: 2, a red circle in the middle in the black background, was adopted in 1946. The black represented the deprivations and the indignities to which the Dravidians are subjected to under the Hindu religious milieu. The red stands for the determined efforts to dispel the ignorance and blind faith among the people and to liberate them materially and mentally from all kinds of exploitation, particularly those of social and cultural. A two-day conference of black-shirt volunteer corps was organised in Madurai in May 1946. On the second day the pandal was burnt down at the instigation of Brahminical Hindu Sanathanis. In the same year on 9th December, Periyar raised his sure voice against the manner in which the Constituent Assembly was constituted.

Periyar declared that 15 August 1947, when India became politically free, was a day of mourning because the event marked, in his opinion, only a transfer of power to the Brahmin - Bania Combine, whose socio-cultural domination, in addition to economic exploitation, would be worse than the British rule. He also viewed the adoption of the Republican Constitution of India in 1950 in a similar vein.

Though he had basic differences with Mahatma Gandhi, Periyar was terribly grieved when he fell a victim to the bullets of a religious fundamentalist of the Hindutva variety on 30th January 1948. He even suggested on the occasion that India should be renamed as Gandhi Naadu.

The Congress government of Madras Province banned the black-shirt volunteer corps in March 1948. But that only made Dravidar Kazhagam more popular. As a result more than a lakh of people, most of them in black shirts, assembled in the D.K.Conference held at Tutucorin on 8,9 May 1948.

Periyar revived the agitation against Hindi when it was again introduced in the schools in June 1948. Though the authorities were stubborn in the initial stages and took stern steps against the agitations, they had to yield in course of time to the popular will, and withdrew the scheme of compulsory study of Hindi.

The firmly entrenched and deeply rooted social evils in India centre around the existence and perpetuation of the caste system known as Varna-Jaathi which forms a basic and inseparable part of the theory and practice of Hindu religion that sanctifies the stratified hierarchy or graded inequality. The beneficiaries of this social structure are the Brahminical upper castes.

Upper caste people who have enormous material resources and mental capabilities obtained through unjust privileges and exclusive traditional advantages. Those who work for the complete transformation of the social order have to wage an unequal war. By his experience and serious thought, Periyar was convinced that the individuals and movements that undertake the task of eradicating the social evils in India have to pursue the goal with devotion and dedication without deviating from the path and with uncompromising zeal. If they contest elections aiming to assume political power, they would lose vigour and sense of purpose. But many among his followers had a different view. They wanted to enter into politics and have a share in running the government. They were looking for an opportunity to part with Periyar. When he married Maniammai on 9th July 1948, they quit Dravidar Kazhagam stating that Periyar had set a bad example by marrying a young woman in his old age - he was 70 and she 30. Those who parted company with Periyar formed Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam - DMK, under the leadership of Annadurai.

After the adoption of the Republican Constitution on 26th January 1950, Brahmins went to the Madras High Court and then to the Supreme Court in the same year asking for the discontinuance of the provision of reservation in educational institutions to the historically disadvantaged communities, on the plea that the provision violated the fundamental right to non-discrimination. The courts upheld the plea and declared reservations meant to promote Social Justice unconstitutional. Periyar organised meetings and conferences against the judgment, and also initiated agitations that gained momentum as days passed by. As a result, the Constitution {First Amendment Act} was passed in 1951 adding the Clause 40 the Article 15: "Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of Article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and_ Scheduled Tribes."

The Periyar Self-respect Propaganda Institution was registered on 23rd September 1952. In 1953, as instructed by Periyar, the Buddha's Day was celebrated through out the state urging the need to follow a rationalist way of life, and the idols of the elephant god Vinayaga (Ganesha) were broken to demonstrate symbolically the inefficacy of the innumerable deities worshipped by the educated and uneducated people.

In the meanwhile C.Rajagopalachari who had become the Chief Minister of Madras State for the second time between 1952 and 1954, had introduced the scheme of conducting classes in the schools in the forenoon and asking the students to learn the traditional jobs of their parents in the afternoon. At the first stage it was implemented in the rural areas of the state. The Dravidian leaders rightly assessed that the scheme was a clever device to keep the Shudra and Panchama castes as illiterates or semi-literates. Their children had just begun to attend school after centuries of denial of educational opportunities. They dubbed C. Rajagopalachari's scheme as Castiest Education Plan (Kula Kalvi Thittam) and began to agitate under Periyar's leadership demanding its withdrawal. As a consequence, the Chief Minister had to resign in March 1954, and Kamaraj assumed office on 14th April.

Kamaraj abolished the half-day-teaching scheme, and assured Periyar that his Government would extent educational facilities to people in every nook and corner of the state. He also assured that he would sincerely implement the policy of communal representation opening up opportunities to the underprivileged in education and administration. As Kamaraj adhered truly to his assurances, Periyar gave him his unstinted backing. Though Periyar supported Congress nearly 30 years after he quit the same in 1925, his support was more to the person than to the party.

In November and December 1954 and in the first week of January 1955, Periyar and his wife Maniammai went on a propaganda tour to Burma and Malaysia. In Burma, he attended the Buddhist Conference, and had a discussion with Dr. B.R.Ambedkar. Perhaps this was the last meeting between the two great men, before the latter passed away on 6th December 1956. They had similar views on almost all the points related to socio-religious issues in India.

Periyar went to the burial ground in Thanjavur on 28 March 1955 to pay homage to Pattukkottai Azhagirisamy (Azhagiri, the dare-devil), an ardent follower of Dravidar Kazhagam principles and a fiery speaker, who passed away on the same day in 1949. He found a board indicating a separate place for burial for Shudras! Periyar wrote a letter to the district collector expressing his objection to the display of the board and to the practice of following "Varna dharma" even while burrying or cremating. As a consequence, the board was removed and the practice discontinued.

On 1st August 1956, the Dravidar Kazhagam undertook an agitation of burning the portrait of Lord Rama as he symbolised the preservation of Varna dharma. Periyar was placed under preventive arrest on this occasion. The States in India were reorganised on linguistic basis on 1st November 1956, and Periyar welcomed this measure.

In those days, the board "Brahmins Hotel" was displayed, following the lead given by the Brahmins, to indicate that only vegetarian food was served there. Dravidar Kazhagam objected to the Varna dharma connotation and started an agitation symbolically in front of a hotel in Madras (Chennai) on 5th May 1957. Batches of volunteers agitated daily and 1010 of them courted arrest till 22nd March 1958 when it culminated in success.

The provisions of the Constitution that helped to safeguard caste system was burnt by about 10,000 volunteers of Dravidar Kazhagam on 26th November 1957. In this historic agitation, about 3000 of them were sentenced to undergo various terms of rigorous imprisonment, from two months to three years.

On December 14, 1957, Periyar was sentenced to undergo six months imprisonment in a case based on fabricated police diaries where in he was accused of asking his followers to use force against Brahmins, an accusation that Periyar naturally denied. Two of the volunteers, Ramasamy and Vellaichamy, imprisoned for burning the provisions of the Constitution supporting casteism, died in jail. Their bodies were obtained with great effort by Maniammai from the unwilling and obstructing prison authorities and burried with due honours, after being taken in an emotionally charged procession through the main streets of Tiruchirappalli. Due to the rigours they underwent in prison, about 15 people died soon after they were released.

In January 1959, Periyar went to Bangalore to participate in the All India Official Language Conference. Along with General Kariappa and Medappa, he stressed the need to retain English as the Union Official Language. In February he undertook a tour of North India and propagated his principles of rationalism, social justice and self-respect way of life.

In June 1960, Periyar asked people to burn the map of India as a protest against the Central Government using the Union of India for upholding and safeguarding caste system. About 4000 people were arrested for taking part in this agitation. In 1962, Periyar wrote a special article in the Tamil Rationalist daily, Viduthalai", welcoming the present President of Dravidar Kazhagam, Thiru K.Veeramani who had offered to become a full time volunteer of the movement giving up his lucrative profession of a lawyer.

The Congress leader Kamaraj expressed his wish to resign Chief Ministership and work whole time to strengthen the Party. Periyar sent a telegram to Kamaraj stating that it would be suicidal to the people of Tamil Nadu and to

him, if he quit the office as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. But Kamaraj did not change his decision, and consequently M.Baktavatsalam became the Chief Minister on 3rd October 1963.

As recommended by the National Integration Commission under the Chairmanship of Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer, the Parliament enacted a law in 1963, prohibiting the propagation of ideas demanding separation from the Indian Union. Periyar vehemently opposed the law.

In April 1964, Dravidar Kazhagam conducted meetings throughout the State, condemning the Supreme Court's verdict against the State's Act fixing a ceiling to land holding.

Periyar criticized the spontaneous and fierce agitation that raged through out Tamil Nadu between January 25 and February 15, 1965 against the imposition of Hindi resulting in several deaths, because it was rudderless and unorganized.

In the name of protecting cows, an unruly mob, motivated by the Hindutva ideology attempted to burn the Delhi residence of K.Kamaraj and kill him on 7th November 1966. He escaped by sheer chance. Periyar strongly condemned this barbaric attack and called upon people to be vigilant to protect Kamaraj by all means.

Dravidar Kazhagam supported congress party in 1957, 1962 and 1967 general elections, and opposed DMK, which formed the government in the State in 1967. Soon after, Annadurai went to Tiruchirappalli along with all his ministers and paid his homage to his mentor. Periyar was happy when the DMK regime renamed Madras State as Tamil Nadu and made Self-respect marriages legal. It was a non-religious mode of performing marriages introduced by Periyar in late 1920s. Though law till 1967 did not recognize such marriages, thousands of them were conducted due to the influence of the principles of Self-respect.

In October 1967, Periyar undertook a North Indian tour and asked people to work for the eradication of caste system. On 12th and 13th of October, he addressed a Conference of BCs, SCs, STs and minorities in Lucknow.

Dravidar Kazhagam decided in its Central Committee meeting in November to undertake an agitation demanding to put an end to the practice of appointing only Brahmins as Archakas in Agamic temples, as a way of removing one of the root causes of Varna-Jaathi.

The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) gave an Award to Periyar, and the Union Education Minister, Triguna Sen in Madras (Chennai) on 27th June 1970, presented it to him. The citation hailed Periyar as "the Prophet of the New Age, the Socrates of South

East Asia, Father of Social Reform Movement, and Arch enemy of ignorance, superstitions, meaningless customs and base manners."

Unmai, a Tamil fortnightly and Modern Rationalist, an English monthly, were started by Periyar in 1970 and 1971 respectively to propagate the ideals of rational humanism more extensively. The Allahabad High Court lifted proscription of the Hindi version of Periyar's book on Ramayana in 1971. In the same year the proscription of "Ravana Kavyam" proscribed by the Congress Government of the Madras State was removed. On 12th January 1971, the DMK Government enacted a law giving equal opportunities to qualified persons to become the Archakas of Hindu Agamic temples irrespective of their birth in any Varna or Jaathi. On 23rd January a huge "procession of the eradication of superstitions" took place in Salem. The processionists carried large pictures and portraits truly depicting the events and gods described in epics and puranas. When a few intolerant orthodox onlookers threw footwears at the procession, the marchers used the same materials to beat the portrait of Rama beheading the Shudra Sambuka in deep meditation. This action of the Periyarists was blown out of proportion by the media through out India. They also published the pictures of gods and goddesses carried by the marchers. This event was used against DMK-Congress alliance in the general elections held in March 1971. But both the parties secured massive majority, the DMK in Tamil Nadu Assembly and the Congress in the Lokh Sabha.

On March 14, 1972 the Supreme Court gave a seemingly ambiguous judgment in the case against the Tamil Nadu Government's 1971 enactment that threw the job of Archakas open to all the qualified persons irrespective of their caste. As the bureaucracy interpreted this judgement, in favour of the conservatives who defended the status quo, Periyar announced an agitation, exhorting people to work for equal human rights in all spheres including social, religious and cultural. This agitation had become necessary to remove the indignity to the people belonging to the Dravidian race because they were dubbed as Shudras and Panchamas according to Vedic and Brahminical Sanathana Dharma known as Hindu religion.

Periyar organised a conference in Chennai on 8th and 9th December 1973. It was known as "Eradication of the social indignity of the Tamils Conference". The conference decided to fight for equal rights and opportunities for persons of all castes to enter into Garba Graha (Sanctum Sanctorum), known as "Karuvarai Nuzhaivu Porattam" in Tamil. He undertook extensive tours to explain the need to bring to an end the Brahmin domination or privileges in priesthood and in other religious rites and ceremonies as an essential measure to reorganise the social order on the basis of equality.

In the meanwhile the court set aside on October 11, a case against inscribing on the pedestal of Periyar's statues, his famous pronouncements (made in 1967) denying god, and denouncing the worship and propagation of the same.

In his last meeting at Thiagaraya Nagar in Chennai on 19th December 1973, Periyar gave an inspiring clarion call for action to gain social equality and dignified way of life. He fell ill on the next day and breathed his last on 24th December 1973.

10. Legacy of Periyar

Periyar's rationalism can be understood from his own reason. It does not permit to illuminate from schools of philosophy. Periyar spent over six decades working towards educating the Tamils through his speeches. He propagated the realization that everyone is an equal citizen and the differences on basis of caste and creeds were man-made to keep the innocent and ignorant as underdogs in the society. Although Periyar's speeches were targeted towards illiterate and more mundane mass, scores of educated people followed them. These educated elites earlier knew nothing about how a few were propagating blind beliefs and caste distinction for their own selfish ends.

Periyar considered reasoning as a special tool. According to him, all were blessed with his tool but very few use it. Thus it was reasoning that was used in Periyar's material, with respect to related subjects of social interest, presented to his audiences. Periyar was not only a social revolutionary but also a champion of the underprivileged. His sphere of activity was wide and when he took up an issue he went deep into it, understanding the aspects, and did not rest until he found a permanent solution. Communal differences in Tamil society were deep-rooted and appeared to be permanent features until Periyar came to the scene.

Vinoba Bhave met Periyar on 18 January 1957. Thina Thanthi reported that Periyar spoke to the paper's reporter about some of the issues that were discussed at the meeting.

Bhave: I heard that you are fully engaged in the struggle to abolish caste system.

Periyar: I have taken up the abolition of caste system as my first priority. I believe that if the system is abolished people would overcome ignorance and they would lead a disciplined life.

Bhave: I admit that caste system should be abolished. But, I cannot endorse your acts of breaking the idols of our Gods and burning of our Epics.

Periyar: The Gods and Epics are the root cause of the system. That's why, I am targeting them. If we get rid of the Gods and Epics, then the caste system that they created will automatically disappear.

Bhave: There are good things and bad things in Epics. We have to take the good and leave out the bad..."

Periyar: How many people can do it? If you mix poison and sugar and give it, how many people can eat the sugar alone. (Daily Thanthi, 2 August 2004)

After the death of Periyar in 1973, self-respect conferences were held throughout Tamil Nadu. Members were assured that their whole-hearted support and previous activities which the Dravidar Kazhagam was engaged in under the direct guidance of Periyar would continue with the same vigor. During the same year, at Periyar Thidal, Periyar's wife, Maniyammai, the new head of the Dravidar Kazhagam, set fire to the effigies of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana as retaliation to the Ramaleela celebrations where effigies of Ravana, Kumbakarna and Indrajit were burnt in New Delhi. For this act she was imprisoned. During the 1974 May Day meetings held at different places in Tamil Nadu, a resolution urging the Government to preserve 80 percent of jobs for Tamils was passed. Soon after this, a camp was held at Periyar Mansion in Tiruchirapalli to train young men and women to spread the ideals of the Dravidar Kazhagam in rural areas.

On Periyar's Birthday of September 17, 1974, Periyar's Rationalist Library and Research Library and Research Institute was opened by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi. This library contained Periyar's rationalist works, the manuscripts of Periyar and his recorded speeches. Also during the same year Periyar's ancestral home in Erode, was dedicated as a commemoration building. On February 20, 1977, the opening function of Periyar Building in Madras was held. At the meeting which the Managing Committee of the Dravidar Kazhagam held, there on that day, it was decided to support the candidates belonging to the Janata Party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, and the Marxist Party during the General Elections. On March 16, 1978, Maniyammai died. The Managing Committee of the Dravidar Kazhagam resolved on the day that in memory of Thanthai Periyar and Annaiyar Maniyammai they would carry on the activities of the Dravidar Kazhagam as vigorously as ever. Krishnasamy Veeramani was elected as General Secretary of the Dravidar Kazhagam on the following day. From then on, the Periyar-Maniyammai Educational and Charitable Society started the Periyar Centenary Women's Polytechnic at Thanjavur on September 21, 1980. On May 8, 1982, the College for Correspondence Education was started under the auspices of the Periyar Rationalist Propganda Organization.

Over the years, the spectrum of Periyar's influence over Tamil Nadu is considerable. His legacy has continuity in many ways. Thinkers and writers such as, Aanaimuthu, Kutoosi Gurusamy, S.V. Rajadurai are influenced by the philosophy of Periyar. Political leaders, such as C.N. Annadurai, M. Karunanidhi, Rajaram, V. Gopalswamy, S. Ramadoss, and Thirumavalavan are the legacies of Periyar in one way or other. Last but not the least, the actors, N.S. Krishnan and M.R.Radha conveyed the ideas of Periyar in their stage and movie performance.

Over the years, the rules of DMK and AIADMK have helped in implementing some of the reformative ideas of Periyar as government policies. The policy of communal reservation in education and employment, abolition of Devadasi

system, reformation in Tamil letters, legalization of self-respect marriage, opening of temple services for Tamils other than Brahmins are some of the significant moves on the line of Periyar ideas. However, grass political opportunism, electoral alliances, coalition rule at centre, inflating media with derogatory and cheaper items for entertainment do not legitimize the continuity of his legacy.

Cho Ramaswamy once remarked, "Periyar was accepted and acclaimed as the leader by a significant section of the Tamil population…he was perceived to be a genuine individual, a rarity among those in public life. There was no shade of hypocrisy in him and he never attempted sophistry while propounding his social philosophy.

It is to be discussed how far the Tamils realized the significance of the rational stand of Periyar. Construction of casteless society, women's liberaltion, political power for the common good, etc. are the major issues to be discussed. The elite are always in the lead to appropriate not only the ideas but also the resources. The critical question in assessing the legacy is who are empowered and who are weakend. This question is ultimately raised to bring out a new line of struggle.

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